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**Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for
Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session
of the General Assembly**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/162. The report highlights discussions of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development. It underscores the need to address inequality to eradicate poverty and achieve the goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on trends in inequality within and among countries. It also addresses the special needs of Africa and the least developed countries and presents progress made in the implementation of programmes related to social groups. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

* A/72/150.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/162, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, with a special focus on trends in inequality within and among countries. Accordingly, the present report provides an overview of trends in inequality and examines strategies to address inequality to ensure the eradication of poverty for all in assessing progress made in eradicating poverty within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also addresses the special needs of Africa and the least developed countries, and reviews progress made in the implementation of programmes related to social groups. It highlights the situation of young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, families and indigenous peoples and concludes with recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

II. Addressing inequality to implement the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and the 2030 Agenda

A. The need to combat rising inequality in all its dimensions

2. There is growing consensus that high and rising inequality poses a major challenge to further progress in eradicating poverty. Upon adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States committed to reduce inequality and affirmed a vision of a shared future and of societies that are inclusive, just and equitable, and that offer equal opportunities for all.¹ By doing so, the 2030 Agenda mainstreamed inequality into all goals as a cross-cutting issue to ensure that no one is left behind.

3. To end poverty in all its forms and promote shared prosperity, sustained economic growth is necessary. It must be inclusive, however, for its gains to be equitably distributed to maximize the impact on poverty. Appropriate policy interventions are needed, as gains from growth have not trickled down to the poorest segment of the population.

4. High levels of inequality negatively affect growth and its sustainability through multiple channels. Inequality deprives lower-income households of the ability to stay healthy and accumulate physical and human capital, thereby lowering labour productivity and social mobility.² When a large segment of the population remains excluded from the development process, trapped in low-skill, low-wage and low-productivity jobs, or their income stagnates or declines, consumption and aggregate demand are reduced and economic growth slows. This further exacerbates existing inequalities. Increasing concentrations of wealth can also weaken democracy, increase social tensions and undermine social stability, peace and security. Reducing inequality within and among countries is therefore an imperative to achieve social and economic development and enhance social cohesion, political stability and peace.

5. Income inequality is one of many dimensions of inequality. Inequality in opportunities and access to quality education and health care, food and nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation, housing, productive assets such as land and

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1, paras. 3 and 8.

² Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2015).

credit, labour markets and technology, including information and communications technologies, have been identified as major impediments to sustainable development. Inequality in access and opportunities across different dimensions reinforce each other and create a vicious cycle of poverty and inequality that is also transmitted through generations.

6. Members of some social groups are more vulnerable to poverty and inequality, as they often experience discrimination and exclusion. For example, the disparity in income and access to quality education and health care between indigenous people and the general population is large and has generally grown over time. Persons with disabilities continue to experience higher risks of falling into extreme poverty. Similarly, women and girls often experience greater disadvantages than men belonging to the same social group.³

7. The negative effects of climate change and environmental disasters also have differential impacts, with vulnerable groups, poor and rural communities, and low-income countries being disproportionately exposed to floods, droughts and other natural disasters. They also have a lower capacity and assets to recover from such external shocks. Climate change may also cause high and volatile food and commodity prices, hitting poor households and countries hardest.

8. In sum, addressing inequality is a must to achieve sustainable development in the social, economic and environmental dimensions. With the right mix of policies and strategies and more integrated, coherent and coordinated actions, inequality can be reduced, as demonstrated by some countries.

B. Trends in inequality

1. Inequality among countries

9. Global income inequality began to fall in the 1990s, mainly as a result of significant progress in reducing poverty and an increase in average incomes across regions, particularly in East and South-East Asia. The global Gini coefficient index fell from approximately 69.7 in 1988 to 66.8 in 2008, and to 62.5 in 2013,⁴ a level that is still significantly high. Thus, further reducing income inequality between countries remains a challenge. The current rate of reduction in global income inequality is expected to halt, owing to stagnant or slow growth across regions and high population growth in countries with a high incidence of poverty where wide inequality and patterns of growth that are not sufficiently inclusive coexist.

10. Another concern is extreme inequality in wealth, as wealth is much more concentrated in the top tiers. In fact, just eight individuals own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world.⁵ Since 2015, global wealth has risen by \$3.5 trillion, reaching \$256 trillion in 2016, and the richest 1 per cent has owned more wealth than the rest of the world since 2015. While the share of the top 10 per cent in world wealth declined between 2000 and 2009, it began rising after the global financial crisis and is estimated to have reached 89.1 in 2016. The bottom 73.2 per cent (3.5 billion), of which 70 per cent live in Africa and South Asia, held merely 2.4 per cent of total global wealth in 2016.⁶

³ *Report on the World Social Situation 2013: Inequality Matters* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 13.IV.2).

⁴ World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality* (Washington, D.C., International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and World Bank, 2016).

⁵ Oxfam, "An economy for the 99%", briefing paper (January 2017).

⁶ Credit Suisse, *Global Wealth Databook 2016*.

11. Despite progress in narrowing the gap between rich and poor countries, significant health inequities remain across countries and regions. During 2010-2015, a child born in Swaziland could expect to live 55 years, while one born in Japan could live up to 83 years. On average, individuals in high-income countries live 80 years, whereas those in low-income countries live only 61 years. Similarly, the range of the mortality rate for children under 5 years of age is very large, from 150 deaths per 1,000 live births in the Central African Republic to 4 per 1,000 in Luxembourg.⁷ Regional disparities in percentages of undernourished people (795 million in 2015) are also wide, with South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa holding the largest share (35.4 per cent and 27.7 per cent, respectively, in 2014-2016) and East and South-East Asia having made significant reductions.⁸

12. Gender disparities in access to education, particularly upper secondary school, remain persistent in some regions. Despite impressive increases in the enrolment of girls and a reduction of the gender gap in primary enrolment, 28 million young and adolescent⁹ girls remain out of school in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰ On average, girls in the subregion attend school for nine years, and in some countries, as few as five years, compared with 17 years in North America and Western Europe. At the lower secondary level, Arab States, despite higher enrolment rates, have the largest gender gap: 9 per cent in 2012. South Asia has closed the gender gap to 1 per cent in 2012. The gender gap is larger among illiterate adults,¹¹ with two thirds of the world's 744.5 million illiterate adults being women and more than half of 102.1 million illiterate youth being female.

13. Technological innovation has a profound impact on inequality in many dimensions. New technologies can help overcome barriers that drive inequality of both opportunities and outcomes for some people. Despite progress, however, access to technologies remains uneven. The growth in technology investment has occurred predominantly in developed regions and certain developing countries. The rate of Internet use is 81 per cent in developed countries compared with only 15.2 per cent in the least developed countries. Substantial divides in Internet access persist between urban and rural areas and between men and women. In 2016, mobile-broadband networks (3G or above) reached only 67 per cent of the rural population compared with 84 per cent of the global population. The global gender gap among Internet users increased from 11 per cent in 2013 to 12 per cent in 2016. The gap is particularly wide in the least developed countries: 31 per cent.¹²

2. Inequality within countries

14. While income inequality among countries has decreased, overall inequality within countries, with regard to both income and non-income, has increased in many

⁷ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables* (New York, 2017).

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015: Meeting the 2015 International Hunger Targets — Taking Stock of Uneven Progress* (Rome, 2015).

⁹ The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines "youth" as persons 15-24 years of age and "adolescent" as those between the ages of 10 and 19.

¹⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, UNESCO eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education.

¹¹ Adult literacy is defined as the proportion of the adult population aged 15 years and over who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement related to his or her everyday life. Persons who do not meet these criteria are deemed illiterate. For more information, see www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/methodology_sheets/education/adult_literacy.pdf.

¹² International Telecommunication Union, *ICT Facts and Figures 2016* (Geneva, 2016).

countries, with rising trends in most industrialized countries and mixed trends in emerging economies and developing countries. In some developing and emerging countries, in particular Latin American countries, income inequality has declined, even though levels remain high.¹³

15. In advanced economies, the gap between the rich and the poor has reached the highest level in decades. Recent data from OECD countries show that the richest 10 per cent of the population earn 9.6 times the income of the poorest 10 per cent. On average, the rise of income inequality between 1985 and 2005 knocked off approximately 4.7 per cent in cumulative growth across OECD countries between 1990 and 2010. This was driven mainly by the growing gap between lower-income households (the bottom 40 per cent) and the rest of the population. Also, a 1 per cent increase in the income share of the richest 20 per cent in any given year actually lowered GDP growth by 0.08 per cent in the following five years, while a similar increase in the income share of the bottom 20 per cent was associated with higher growth: 0.38 per cent.¹⁴

16. Countries with high income inequality tend to have wider gaps in education outcomes among people with different backgrounds. The majority of the world's 61 million out-of-school children of primary school age are from poor households in rural areas, and a majority of them are girls. It is estimated that 20 per cent of them dropped out of school, 39 per cent will start school later and 41 per cent will never attend school at all.¹⁵ More than half of these children (30 million, of which 17 million are girls) live in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶ Considering that the main pathway to escape poverty and reduce inequality is through education, reaching out to these children is critical.

17. There are also significant gaps in health outcomes within countries. Evidence from 80 countries from 1990 to 2011 shows little or no progress has been made in closing the gap in child stunting between wealthy and poor households.¹⁷ In Latin America and the Caribbean, inequalities across gender, race and socioeconomic groups persist in every major health outcome, including reproductive, maternal and child health.¹⁸ Access to health care for women of indigenous and African descent in the region has been hindered by discrimination, including patient blaming, neglect, verbal or physical abuse and disregard for traditional beliefs.¹⁹ Such women also face inequality in access to clean water and adequate sanitation.

18. As the majority of youth, at the early stage of the life cycle, have little or no accumulated wealth or assets, they are particularly vulnerable to being trapped in poverty and inequality, especially when they experience extended periods of unemployment or underemployment. Recent stagnant growth, coupled with such factors as demographic changes, productivity growth, technological advances and

¹³ *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016*.

¹⁴ Era Dabla-Norris and others, "Causes and consequences of income inequality: a global perspective", International Monetary Fund staff discussion note (2015).

¹⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, UNESCO eAtlas of Out-of-School Children.

¹⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, "Left behind: girls' education in Africa" interactive data tool.

¹⁷ C. Bredenkamp and others, "Persistent inequalities in child undernutrition: evidence from 80 countries, from 1990 to today", *International Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 43, issue 4, pp. 1328-1335 (2014).

¹⁸ Francisco Becerra-Posada, "Health equity: the linchpin of sustainable development", *Pan American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 38, issue 1, pp. 5-8.

¹⁹ Arachu Castro and others, "Assessing equitable care for Indigenous and Afrodescendant women in Latin America", *Pan American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 38, issue 2, pp. 96-109.

precarious jobs, have hampered the generation of sufficient jobs to absorb growing labour forces, posing major challenges to reducing inequality.

19. Older persons also grapple with inequality in various forms. Only a minority of the global population accumulates enough savings and assets to provide for its own economic security in old age. Income inequality is thus a reality poor older persons have to face. Pension coverage is highest (above 90 per cent) in Europe and North America, and lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (17 per cent).²⁰ In many countries, disparities exist among older persons based on where they live, as well as gender. For example, older rural residents are considerably less likely to receive a pension than are older urban residents, owing to rural labour markets in which jobs are typically informal and insecure. Coverage rates for contributory schemes are lower for older women than for older men, often significantly so (see A/69/180). This largely reflects women's lower levels of labour force participation and wages, their work in precarious or informal jobs, and often shorter and interrupted careers owing to their unpaid care responsibilities.

C. Strategies to address inequality in all its dimensions

20. No one-size-fits-all approach exists to combating inequality. Each country considers its own economic, social, cultural and political circumstances, as well as demographics, to develop comprehensive, integrated and coherent strategies that effectively address the various causes of inequality. Such strategies should consist of inclusive and equitable policies aimed at pursuing equity and growth objectives simultaneously, as these two objectives are complementary and not mutually exclusive.

21. Equity enhancing or redistribution policies can contribute to income growth for all segments of society, but with faster than average growth among the poorest 40 per cent of the population.²¹ This could increase local demand and consumption, thereby boosting economic growth and long-term prosperity while breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and inequality. In emerging economies and developing countries, deepening financial inclusion is also an effective tool to buttress aggregate demand.

22. Investments in infrastructure, health, education and skills development should be a part of long-term strategies to achieve inclusive growth and reduce poverty and inequality. Such investment in human and social capital increases productivity, promotes social inclusion and creates decent work. There is growing evidence that countries with a higher tax rate and high social expenditures tend to have low inequality and high social cohesion. Governments need to make fiscal policy and tax systems more efficient, inclusive and equitable,²² reduce tax evasion and identify innovative sources of financing to secure and maintain adequate levels of social expenditures that are necessary to expand coverage towards universal access to education, health care and other elements of social protection.

23. Social inclusion through productive employment and decent work is one of the main channels to reduce inequality and to increase the impact of growth on poverty eradication. To close urban-rural gaps, investing in farm and off-farm activities in rural areas is critical to promote food security, improve nutrition, and boost incomes and quality of life of rural households. Generating jobs, especially labour-intensive

²⁰ International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2014/15* (Geneva, 2014).

²¹ Target 10.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals seeks to ensure that income growth among the poorest 40 per cent of the population in every country is more rapid than its national average.

²² International Monetary Fund, "Tax policy for developing countries", *Economic Issues*, No. 27.

jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises, will support diversification of the rural economy and transform rural areas as a source of employment, thereby curbing rural-urban migration and inequality. Creating jobs in natural resources management will aid protection and rehabilitation of the environment and enhance local climate resilience.

24. The issue of vulnerable work — low-skill, low-productivity jobs in the informal sector with limited to no social protection — needs to be addressed, through facilitating the transition from informality to formality, strengthening the capacity of labour institutions, improving access to credit, harnessing technologies and creating incentives for innovation. Countries should promote vocational training and science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, strengthen the research-policy nexus and create investment opportunities to mitigate potential threats to job insecurity posed by technical innovation, including digitization and artificial intelligence. In advanced economies, universal basic income, where necessary, may be considered.

25. Institutional capacity is important for enhancing policy coherence and coordination among various ministries, conducting risk and vulnerability assessments, collecting high quality disaggregated data, mobilizing resources, promoting transparency and accountability, and combating corruption and illicit financial flows. International partnerships, including official development assistance, play a critical role in building the capacity of countries with the most constrained resources to ensure effective policy formulation and implementation.

26. Countries are increasing domestic resource mobilization for human capital investment, resilience enhancement and adaptation capacity-building. For example, in the Philippines, increased taxes on tobacco and alcohol (the Sin Tax Reform bill passed in 2012) enabled the expansion of health coverage to an additional 45 million people.²³ Similarly, a financial transaction tax, a small tax levied on financial instruments such as shares, bonds, foreign currency transactions, derivatives, and bank debits and credits to finance social protection expenditure, have been implemented in at least 40 developed and developing countries. Financial transaction taxes allowed Brazil to expand its social protection services and reduce inequality.²⁴

27. The potential role of public-private partnerships can be further explored in such areas as improving access to essential services, promoting equity, increasing efficiency and effectiveness, promoting green growth and scaling up innovative initiatives. Nevertheless, foreign direct investment in infrastructure, particularly in the least developed countries, has not yet surged, owing to existing constraints, including insufficient legal and regulatory frameworks and a less attractive risk-reward ratio. Setting clear criteria for real impacts from social investments and reducing the risks of these investments are necessary. A promising example of the use of public-private partnerships is China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which is aimed at boosting economic growth and lifting 3 billion more people with low incomes into the middle class.²⁵

28. Gender equality and women's empowerment have large impacts on achieving inclusive growth. Tackling gender-based discrimination, in particular closing gender

²³ World Health Organization, "'Sin Tax' expands health coverage in the Philippines" (May 2015), available from www.who.int/features/2015/ncd-philippines/en/.

²⁴ International Labour Organization, "Delivering social protection for all", Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development issue brief (Geneva, October 2016).

²⁵ Economic Commission for Europe, "Promoting people first public-private partnerships (PPPs) for the UN SDGs", Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development Issue Brief (Geneva, July 2016).

gaps in labour participation, boost GDP.²⁶ To achieve the full potential of women, further efforts are required to better link gender issues with inclusive growth policy, for example, by eliminating gender bias in taxation.

29. Science, technology and innovation are central to promoting equity and inclusivity. To close digital gaps, countries are encouraged to invest in research and development and support the adoption of key enabling information and communications technologies, while mitigating new risks posed by such technologies. Any existing barriers to quality access to such technologies should be reduced or removed. National strategies should promote technological diffusion, through institutional changes, knowledge sharing and partnership.

III. Issues before the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-fifth session

30. As the intergovernmental body responsible for the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the Commission for Social Development, at its fifty-fifth session, reviewed progress in this regard in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

A. Priority theme: strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all

31. Along with their central pursuit of poverty eradication, Member States have resolved to end hunger, combat inequality and build just and inclusive societies. They have pledged to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first. Within every society, women, persons with disabilities, youth, older persons and indigenous people, among others, are often left behind by progress. At the international level, the groups of countries that are further behind include sub-Saharan Africa, the least developed countries and small island developing States. These groups have limited resources and productive capacity to overcome poverty.

1. Progress in poverty eradication

32. Most of the world's regions have made progress in eradicating extreme poverty. Based on a poverty line of \$1.90 a day, 35 per cent of the world population lived in extreme poverty in 1990; that rate fell to 11 per cent in 2013. East Asia and the Pacific, where the rate decreased from 60 per cent in 1990 to 4 per cent in 2013, recorded the most significant progress, driven largely by China. Three regions succeeded in cutting their 1990 rates by at least two thirds by 2013: South Asia (from 45 per cent to 15 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (from 16 per cent to 5 per cent) and the Middle East and North Africa (from 6 per cent to 2 per cent). By contrast, sub-Saharan Africa experienced a slow pace of decline in extreme poverty: from 54 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2013.²⁷ The number of extremely poor people, although also declining, was still 767 million people in 2013. Between 2012 and 2013, the number decreased mainly in East Asia and the Pacific (by 71 million) and South Asia (by 37 million). By contrast, the number fell by only 4 million in sub-Saharan Africa, where 389 million people were still living on less than \$1.90 a day in 2013.

²⁶ David Cuberes and Marc Teignier, "Gender gaps in the labor market and aggregate productivity", Sheffield Economic Research Paper (University of Sheffield, 2012).

²⁷ World Bank, World Bank Open Data. Available from <http://data.worldbank.org>.

33. Developed countries have recently recorded an increase in relative poverty (household income below 60 per cent of the national median income), especially in the European Union, where the relative poverty rate increased to 17.2 per cent in 2014 after a long period of stability at 16.5 per cent up to 2008.²⁸ In developed countries, an estimated 300 million people were living in relative poverty in 2012.

34. Children and women are most affected by poverty. In developing countries, more than half of all children under the age of 15 live in extreme or moderate poverty. In high-income countries, 20 per cent of children under the age of 18 live in poverty, although with wide variations among countries: from 10 per cent in Denmark, Iceland and Norway to 33 per cent in Israel and Romania.²⁹

2. Strategies for eradicating poverty

35. Rapid economic growth over extended periods of time has proven to be the main factor in reducing absolute poverty. Such growth provides the resources needed for increased public investment in critical areas such as education, health, infrastructure and social protection. Economic growth alone, however, is not sufficient to eradicate poverty unless it is accompanied by strategies that ensure that the benefits of growth are widely and equitably shared. People living in poverty should be able to contribute to and benefit from growth that creates decent jobs and raises incomes. For growth to be more inclusive, it must generate decent jobs in the sectors in which people living in poverty are often engaged in, such as agriculture and labour-intensive manufacturing.

36. Poor workers are usually trapped in precarious low-skilled, low-income and low-productivity jobs. They are also more likely to be engaged in agriculture and rural economic activities, and be employed in the informal economy. Therefore, policies that enhance skills, promote labour-intensive and higher-productivity sectors, and formalize the informal economy are vital for increasing the productivity and labour market participation of poor workers, thereby raising their income. Labour-market and social policies that improve the quality of jobs can help lower poverty. These policies, which include minimum wages, labour regulations and social security provisions, help to improve wages and working conditions, as well as job security.

37. Investment in education and health is a proven strategy for poverty eradication that also contributes to a reduction in inequality. Poverty eradication requires that children and youth acquire the education and skills necessary for a better future. Investments in education should also include social infrastructure such as hygienic, gender-separated sanitation facilities and well-trained teachers that can provide good quality education to all, particularly to poor, female children and youth. Investing in health also has a great impact on poverty reduction. For instance, HIV/AIDS and malaria treatments prevent lost productivity or lost income associated with illness or death.

38. In rural areas, in addition to rural development policies, including redistributive land policies and improved access to formal credit markets, increasing agricultural productivity through both public and private investment in mechanization, extension services and the use of fertilizers is vital to reducing poverty. Furthermore, structural transformation policies that facilitate public-private partnerships and foreign direct investment to expand employment opportunities in

²⁸ International Labour Organization, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends 2016* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2016).

²⁹ United Nations Children's Fund Office of Research, *Building the Future: Children and the Sustainable Development Goals in Rich Countries*, Innocenti Report Card 14 (Florence, Italy, 2017).

high-productivity manufacturing and service sectors to shift labour out of traditional agriculture are vital to alleviating poverty.

39. Social protection policies and programmes are essential for eradicating poverty and reducing vulnerability by diminishing people's exposure to risks, enhancing their capacities and resilience, promoting their participation in the labour market and increasing the opportunities available to them. Social transfers, including conditional cash transfers, have been very influential in reducing poverty in several regions of the world, delivering much faster results than economic growth. To be effective, though, social protection benefits must reach the poor and vulnerable.

40. Recently, countries have committed to providing fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including social protection floors, with a focus on the poorest. Similarly, the idea of a universal basic income, which supports a living wage and not a minimum wage, is starting to be explored and experimented with by policymakers in some countries.

B. The special needs of Africa and the least developed countries

1. Africa: progress and challenges in economic and social development

41. At the global level, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to supporting the special needs of Africa, as reflected in the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. These regional and international development frameworks all aim for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

42. Africa has made notable progress in economic growth, although the rate of growth has slowed. Likewise, Africa has made strides in social development, but there are still too many people who are extremely poor, undernourished, unemployed and not in school. High levels of morbidity and mortality also persist. Moreover, Africa is experiencing rising income inequality and youth unemployment, both of which can be threats to peace and security, especially in fragile States. Intensified efforts are required to address all these special needs of Africa.

43. Extreme poverty has decreased in Africa, but slowly. Consequently, 39 per cent of its population was still living on less than \$1.90 a day in 2013.³⁰ Owing to the slow poverty decline, combined with rapid population growth, the number of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa increased until 2010 but has decreased since then. Nevertheless, in 2013, the subregion was home to half of the world's extremely poor population: 389 million people.

44. Africa's strong economic growth — GDP growing at above 5 per cent annually between 2001 and 2014 — supported its progress in poverty reduction. The growth has not, however, generated sufficient jobs, owing to the enclave nature of the resource-intensive sectors involved, and the fact that these sectors tend to benefit only the richest.³¹ Consequently, Africa's high economic growth has very often exacerbated inequality and in some cases worsened poverty. Moreover, the economy of the region has slowed and is estimated to have grown by only 1.7 per cent annually in 2016 as a result of the effect of low commodity prices on resource

³⁰ *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016*.

³¹ African Development Bank Group, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Development Programme, *African Economic Outlook 2016: Sustainable Cities and Structural Transformation* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2016).

exporters.³² This backdrop of weak growth puts additional challenges on maintaining previously hard-won progress on poverty reduction.

45. Africa's high levels of poverty exist alongside high and deepening levels of inequality in some countries. Six of the nine most unequal countries in the world are African,³³ and the continent is the second most unequal region in the world. To significantly reduce poverty levels, inclusive growth is necessary and high economic growth accompanied by a significant decrease in inequality must be ensured to maximize the impact of growth on poverty. Moreover, income-related and gender-related inequality have been shown to impede economic growth in Africa, especially in low-income countries.

46. Africa has reduced hunger, as attested to by the proportion of undernourished people, which fell from 28 per cent to 20 per cent between 1990-1992 and 2014-2016.³⁴ Within the region, the proportion declined substantially in sub-Saharan Africa, from 33 per cent to 19 per cent. Despite these falling rates, the number of undernourished people increased from 182 million to 233 million in Africa, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for the majority (87.2 per cent) of the increase. Nevertheless, some regions, such as Western Asia, have been able to decrease the number of undernourished people.

47. Africa has the world's fastest-growing labour force; 60 per cent of its population was younger than 25 in 2015.³⁵ Unemployment, underemployment and informality remain its key challenges. Overall, the unemployment rate decreased after 2010 but is expected to remain unchanged at 8 per cent in 2016 and 2017, which translates into an additional 1.2 million unemployed people. High youth and female unemployment levels are of particular political and socioeconomic concern. In North Africa, the labour force participation rate was the lowest in the world: 48.2 per cent in 2015.³⁶ Unemployment was more than three times higher among youth than among adults, and youth unemployment was the highest in the world: 30 per cent in 2015. Unemployment among females is twice as high as unemployment among males, with an expected rate of 20 per cent in 2017.³⁷

48. Although the average unemployment rate was low in sub-Saharan Africa (7 per cent in 2016), it masked great disparities between countries, with South Africa exhibiting the highest rate: more than 26 per cent.³⁸ In this subregion, the main labour market challenge resides in the poor quality of employment, especially among youth and women. For instance, 70 per cent of working youth were poor in 2016.

49. In terms of education, enrolment in primary school has experienced steady progress in Africa. North Africa has almost achieved universal primary education and sub-Saharan Africa has been able to increase its net enrolment rate from 58 per cent in 1999 to 77 per cent in 2014, resulting in a reduction in the number of out-of-school children from 45 million to 34 million over the same period, despite growth in the primary school-age population.³⁹ By increasing its net enrolment rate in

³² *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2017* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.C.2).

³³ According to the World Bank world development indicators (distribution of income or consumption). Available from <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/1.3>.

³⁴ *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015*.

³⁵ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables* (New York, 2015).

³⁶ *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends 2016*.

³⁷ *Economic Outlook 2016: Sustainable Cities and Structural Transformation*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, UIS-Stat database, data and indicators on education. Available from <http://data.uis.unesco.org>.

secondary education from 20 per cent to 33 per cent, sub-Saharan Africa has also achieved the greatest gains in secondary education participation over the same period.

50. Notwithstanding these remarkable efforts and progress, completion rates and quality of education remain challenges requiring a special focus, owing to a lack of physical and social infrastructure. One third of children who begin the first grade do not reach the last grade of primary education⁴⁰ and many students are not acquiring basic skills in reading and mathematics.

51. Over the years, a steady rise in immunization coverage and the availability of vaccines and therapies has improved health and survival in Africa.⁴¹ Sub-Saharan Africa still faces major challenges, however. In 2015, it accounted for more than half of maternal deaths and 92 per cent of malaria deaths worldwide. A high proportion of its newborns died in the first month: around 30 per 1,000 births.

52. For all the above indicators, wide gaps between the rich and poor, males and females, educated and non-educated people, and urban and rural areas persist within countries.

2. Special needs of the least developed countries

53. The least developed countries face challenges in achieving economic and social development objectives. To generate the resources needed for structural transformation and the building of productive capacities, as well as to sustain progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly ending poverty and hunger, these countries need strong economic growth. Economic growth has slowed since 2012, however, to a rate of 3.6 per cent per annum in 2015, far below the target of at least 7 per cent per annum recommended by the 2011 Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020. The sharp decline in commodity prices, which has particularly affected commodity-exporting African least developed countries, is the main reason behind this poor performance.⁴²

54. In terms of social indicators, poverty has steadily declined but remains high and most pervasive in the least developed countries, with 51 per cent of their total population — around 400 million people — still living in extreme poverty in 2016.⁴³ Similarly, the prevalence of undernourishment has decreased, but slowly. One in four people in the least developed countries remained undernourished in 2015,⁴⁴ and the number of undernourished people has increased in African least developed countries since 1990.⁴⁵ Inclusive growth and social protection are necessary to end poverty and hunger in this group of countries, especially for those whose livelihoods depend on agriculture. Social protection also improves access to better nutrition, education and health care.

⁴⁰ Economic Commission for Africa, African Union, African Development Bank Group and United Nations Development Programme, *MDG Report 2015: Lessons Learned in Implementing the MDGs — Assessing Progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals* (Addis Ababa, 2015).

⁴¹ World Health Organization (WHO), *The Health of the People: What Works — The African Regional Health Report 2014* (Brazzaville, WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2014).

⁴² *The Least Developed Countries Report 2016: The Path to Graduation and Beyond — Making the Most of the Process* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.II.D.9).

⁴³ Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, *State of the Least Developed Countries 2016* (2016).

⁴⁴ World Bank, World Bank Open Data. Available from <http://data.worldbank.org>.

⁴⁵ *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015*.

55. Unemployment has remained low in the least developed countries, with a rate of between 5 per cent and 6 per cent since the 1990s. Underemployment is prevalent, however, with 40 per cent of workers working less than 35 hours a week in 2016. Furthermore, most workers are engaged in informal employment, with only 6 per cent of all workers being covered by labour laws and social protection through written contracts. Youth unemployment is also a great challenge in this group of countries, with a rate that is twice as high as the adult unemployment rate. Moreover, in many countries, over half of youth are in informal employment. In addition, young people face considerable difficulty in finding decent and secure employment, partly because of a mismatch between skills and labour market needs. As a remedy to the latter situation, it is crucial to ensure that the educational system generates knowledge and skills that correspond to the ones demanded by employers by raising the quality of education and promoting dual vocational training systems which provide work-based learning and apprenticeships and integrate theory and practice through cooperation between schools and employers in skills development.⁴⁶

56. Primary education has seen great progress in the least developed countries. The net enrolment rate in primary education rose from 56 per cent in 1995 to 82 per cent in 2014.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, primary education completion rates and quality need to be enhanced. For instance, the pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary education in the least developed countries is almost double the world average.⁴⁸ Also, enrolment rates at the secondary and tertiary levels need to increase; by 2014, the net enrolment rate in secondary education stood at only 35 per cent.⁴⁹ Finally, gender and socioeconomic disparities need to be narrowed. Increased financial resources allocated to education that have allowed the implementation of policies such as free primary education, school-feeding programmes, construction of new classrooms and the setting up of community schools have helped improve enrolment in primary education.

57. The least developed countries have also made great improvements in child survival. Between 1995 and 2015, the infant mortality rate was halved (from 99 per 1,000 births to 51 per 1,000 births) and mortality for children under the age of 5 years decreased even faster (from 176 per 1,000 births to 73 per 1,000 births).⁵⁰ Policies that provide high-impact, cost-effective health and nutrition interventions can help reduce most preventable child deaths. These interventions include giving families and communities access to essential skills and basic health knowledge, such as proper feeding practices and hygiene.

C. Implementation of programmes related to social groups

58. As part of its programme of work, the Commission also reviewed the implementation of programmes related to social groups.

59. The role of families in the promotion of human development has been widely recognized at the national and international levels. Policies and programmes aimed at promoting the well-being of families undoubtedly contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals. The failure to incorporate family

⁴⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, UIS-Stat database.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *The Least Developed Countries Report 2016*.

⁴⁹ *State of the Least Developed Countries 2016*.

⁵⁰ *The Least Developed Countries Report 2016*.

policies into overall social development frameworks may result in greater inequalities.

60. Cash transfers for vulnerable households have been credited with overall poverty reduction and breaking the cycle of the intergenerational transfer of poverty. Investments in work-family balance and early childhood education have created better conditions for working parents, which have also contributed to better outcomes for children and youth. There is also a growing recognition that care responsibilities should be shared by families, the state, the market and civil society, with a goal of promoting the overall well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies. Recent exchanges of good practices in family policy also point to the fact that it is equally important to promote integrated, multigenerational approaches to social protection that are also sensitive to care responsibilities.

61. Member States emphasized the importance of supporting the well-being and the rights of older persons, who are among the groups left behind. While older persons are living longer, many have poor standards of living and are either living in or at risk of poverty. Many Governments have focused on extending and deepening social protection systems with a view to promoting poverty reduction and improved well-being among older persons, particularly through contributory and non-contributory pensions. Pension benefit levels, however, are not always adequate to enable older persons to live above the poverty line and with dignity. Health status and access to affordable health care, as well as the availability of affordable care, are factors that influence poverty in old age. Older women are also at much greater risk of poverty than older men.

62. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for, and with, youth is a present and forthcoming priority for many Member States, in conjunction with the achievement of other development frameworks, including the World Programme of Action for Youth, in an integrated manner. To undertake the aforementioned responsibilities, Member States continue to tackle challenges of youth unemployment and underemployment, including by numerous types of entrepreneurship policies and programmes, the promotion of green jobs and industries, and targeted employment schemes.

63. The issues of quality education and decent work for the social inclusion of young people remain important worldwide. Member States have undertaken relevant measures, including providing vocational skills training, developing and implementing targeted initiatives to address the situation of marginalized youth, increasing the availability of student funding and prioritizing technology education and programmes to address the gender gap in education.

64. In the area of disability, efforts and progress have been made to promote the economic, civil and political participation of persons with disabilities at the national level. Returns on investment in the education of persons with disabilities are estimated to be two to three times higher than those for persons without disabilities. Children with disabilities should, to the extent possible, attend regular schools because putting them in special schools increases the cost of education by up to three times while also reinforcing segregation-based disability. Several countries explicitly mention persons with disabilities in employment policies and programmes and include them in public procurement policies, public employment programmes and other public works programmes. Several other countries have adopted employment quota systems. A combination of non-contributory and contributory social transfers are provided to persons with disabilities in developed countries and Latin America, while only contributory-based social insurance benefits provided to those engaged in formal employment exist in the majority of developing countries.

65. The year 2017 marks the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Over the past decade, there has been major progress in implementing the Declaration, including through constitutional and legislative measures at the national level to recognize the rights and identity of indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, there continues to be a gap between the formal recognition of indigenous peoples and the implementation of policies on the ground. Thus, indigenous peoples continue to face exclusion, marginalization and major challenges in enjoying their basic rights. Indigenous peoples make up around 5 per cent of the world's population, but 15 per cent of the poorest. In the light of these realities, the 2030 Agenda, with its promise to "leave no one behind," can be of crucial importance to indigenous peoples and their rights. At the same time, indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge have much to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

D. Emerging issue: promoting integrated policies for poverty eradication: youth development in the 2030 Agenda

66. There were 1.2 billion youth (people aged 15-24 years) globally in 2015, accounting for one out of every six people worldwide. By 2030, the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7 per cent, to nearly 1.3 billion. While youth populations have stabilized in most regions, it is projected that the number of youth in Africa will have increased by 42 per cent by 2030, from 226 million in 2015, and is expected to continue to grow throughout the remainder of the twenty-first century, more than doubling from current levels by 2055. In contrast, in Asia, home to the largest youth population in the world, the number of young people is expected to decline in the coming years.

67. Among the greatest challenges facing many countries today are inadequate human capital investment and high unemployment rates among youth. Young people are not acquiring the education and skills needed to contribute in a productive economy, and they lack access to labour markets that can provide decent work for all. In particular, sub-Saharan Africa, the region facing a youth bulge, is anticipated to face significant challenges to ensuring universal high quality education, productive employment and decent work for all young people. Youth development is therefore a key driver of poverty eradication around the world.

68. Against this background, key aspects of youth development addressed in the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, such as decent work for all, gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women, and inclusion of marginalized youth through targeted youth policy measures, were examined and discussed.

69. Member States continue to use the World Programme of Action for Youth in the development of national youth policies, including youth employment policies. While the effective formulation, implementation and monitoring of youth policies play a critical role in poverty eradication and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, youth policies are often being implemented in isolation without appropriate financing. More robust, innovative and progressive youth policies must be developed and implemented in coordination with other sectoral policies that have an impact on youth.

70. Member States echoed their support for youth partnerships in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Agenda. The participation of young people in policymaking processes, particularly social policies, was identified as key to eradicating poverty. Investing in sustainable youth participation mechanisms at all levels is therefore critical.

71. Youth policies should include measures to analyse and remove structural barriers to their participation, so that all youth, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged youth, can break an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Barriers faced by girls and young women need to be addressed, since such barriers as exclusion and lack of or limited access to quality education and employment can increase their chances of being trapped in poverty. Adequate budgets should be allocated to support gender-specific policies and measures towards gender equality and women's empowerment, while promoting gender-responsive budgeting to mainstream gender perspectives in all other gender-neutral policies.

72. Youth are often disproportionately affected by unemployment, underemployment, vulnerable employment and working poverty. It is vital for youth to access productive employment and decent work that are sufficiently remunerated and provide access to social protection and rights at work. Decent work facilitates the social inclusion of young people, improves their health and enhances their dignity, participation and their engagement towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

73. Inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all remain important to combat the exclusion of youth from the educational system and changing labour markets as a result of technological advances. Such education, in addition to basic skills, is essential for youth to obtain important livelihood skills to support the transition from school to work.

74. Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, youth living in rural areas and young migrants may be at greater risk of poverty, marginalization and social exclusion, which hinder their ability to meaningfully participate in social, economic, cultural and political life, and can result in a lifelong propensity to experience poverty. Integrated youth policies need to: address the specific needs of marginalized youth; identify the conditions that lead to vulnerability, poverty and social exclusion; increase the visibility of marginalized youth; reduce inequality; and provide the tools and skills necessarily to access decent employment.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

75. The eradication of poverty is a major goal of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit For Social Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While tremendous progress has been made in reducing poverty worldwide, millions of people remain trapped in extreme poverty and there are significant disparities in many social and economic dimensions between and within countries. High and rising rates of inequality negatively affect economic growth and hamper current progress in eradicating poverty. Member States and the international community must enhance their efforts to eradicate poverty while tackling the multiple dimensions of inequality. In this regard, the Commission for Social Development, given its mandates and experience in promoting people-centred inclusive development, has an important role to play in contributing to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a holistic and inclusive manner.

76. In order to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) **Member States should develop comprehensive, integrated and coherent strategies that effectively address the structural causes of poverty and**

inequality by pursuing equity and growth objectives simultaneously in their national contexts. Such strategies should promote inclusion and equity to sustain income growth for all, with an emphasis on job-rich growth;

(b) Member States need to strengthen universal social policies, paying particular attention to the specific challenges of disadvantaged social groups to ensure that these groups, especially women, children, persons with disabilities, youth, older persons, indigenous people and other persons in vulnerable situations, are not left behind. Reducing gender disparities, specifically in education, health, well-being and labour participation, is essential;

(c) Investment in human capital and social protection is proven effective in reducing poverty and inequality. Member States may consider making fiscal policies and tax systems more inclusive and equitable, while mobilizing innovative sources of financing, including through public-private partnerships, to secure adequate levels of social expenditure necessary for expanding coverage towards universal access to health, education, innovation and new technologies and basic social protection;

(d) To close urban-rural gaps, Member States should pursue social and economic policies to support the creation of farm and off-farm jobs, especially labour-intensive and higher-productivity jobs in micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. Redistributive land policies and improved access to formal credit markets through greater financial inclusion, as well as structural transformation policies that help shift labour to high-productivity manufacturing and services sectors, may be considered by Member States within their national contexts;

(e) The international community should support national commitments to eradicate poverty in all its forms to ensure that no one is left behind. Particularly, greater international cooperation to further reduce inequality between countries and increase capacity-building support to countries with the most constrained resources to ensure that social expenditures meet certain targets should be promoted.

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Social development: social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family**Cooperatives in social development****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/128. In the report, the role of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the means through which they advance the central pledge to leave no one behind are highlighted. The contribution of cooperatives to addressing the developmental challenges of the least developed countries and opportunities for leveraging the resources of the cooperative enterprise model and of the international, regional and national cooperative organizations to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are explored in depth. The report includes proposed strategies for strengthening cooperatives, given the key challenges that they face in their pursuit of sustainable development for all, and concludes with policy recommendations for the further advancement of cooperatives.

* A/72/150.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 70/128, the General Assembly recognized that cooperatives, in their various forms, promoted the fullest possible participation in the economic and social development of all people, including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. It recognized the important contribution and potential of all forms of cooperatives to the follow-up to the United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields and noted the acknowledgement of the role of cooperatives in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in relation to financing for development in the outcome documents of United Nations summits. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its seventy-second session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In the present report, the role of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the means through which they advance the central pledge to leave no one behind are highlighted. The contribution of cooperatives to addressing the developmental challenges of the least developed countries and opportunities for leveraging the resources of the cooperative enterprise model and of the international, regional and national cooperative organizations to implement the 2030 Agenda are explored in depth. The report sets out the key challenges facing cooperatives in the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda, strategies to further promote the cooperative enterprise model and recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

II. The role of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals¹

3. The 2030 Agenda calls for collaborative partnership among all countries and all stakeholders in implementing an ambitious plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. The Agenda champions a path towards sustainable development that seeks "win-win" cooperation in the collective pursuit of global development. It emphasizes a people-centred and integrated approach, with a particular commitment to the empowerment of people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. Heads of State and Government and development partners acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, including cooperatives, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. Cooperative enterprises are in a unique position to help to promote the 2030 Agenda. They are natural vehicles to deliver the collaborative partnership and the people-centred and integrated approach required to attain the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. As values-driven and principles-based enterprises,² they work towards the well-being of all their members and focus on the development of the communities in which they operate. It is inherent among them to safeguard

¹ This present section highlights the key contributions that the cooperative enterprise model can make to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. It can be read in conjunction with the previous report of the Secretary-General on cooperatives in social development (A/70/161), submitted to the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

² Cooperatives are autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. All cooperatives adhere to seven principles that govern their actions and practices: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for the community.

community relations, enhance local resources, advocate social responsibility and adopt sustainable and long-term business practices.

5. Across the world, cooperatives promote sustainable development in all its three dimensions — social, economic and environmental. They have a significant presence in both developed and developing countries, serving more than 1 billion members or clients.³ As a group, they employ more than 100 million people worldwide, which is 20 per cent more than the number employed by multinational enterprises.⁴ Together, the world's largest 300 cooperatives had a total turnover of more than \$2.5 trillion in 2014, spanning various economic sectors, such as agriculture, banking and finance, insurance, health care and wholesale and retail trade.⁵

A. Cooperatives contribute to the eradication of poverty and hunger and promote prosperity in a changing world

6. The objective of shared prosperity is at the centre of the 2030 Agenda. Leaving no one behind entails that societies must address the problem of poverty. Cooperatives contribute to poverty reduction in many important ways, including by: (a) identifying and providing economic opportunities for their members; (b) empowering the disadvantaged to participate equally in all aspects of cooperative affairs and society at large and defending their interests; (c) providing security to people living in poverty by allowing them to convert individual risks into collective risks; and (d) mediating member access to assets that they utilize to earn a living.⁶

7. Agricultural growth and rural development are critical to the eradication of hunger. Agriculture and food cooperatives provide smallholder farmers access to resources, such as credit, farm inputs, land, technology and insurance, to raise productivity and income. They help them to achieve food, employment and livelihood security and acquire the means to move out of poverty. Cooperatives also improve market access, especially for smallholder producers, helping farmers to raise their income.⁷

8. Cooperatives reach the most excluded sections of the population, providing needed goods and services otherwise not met by the private and public sectors. Many cooperative members obtain access to formal financial services through savings and credit cooperatives and credit unions. Approximately 45 per cent of the branches of financial cooperatives are in rural areas, compared with only 26 per cent of the branches of commercial banks.⁸ Worldwide, there are about 53,000 credit cooperatives and credit unions serving more than 857 million people, of which

³ Dave Grace and Associates, "Measuring the size and scope of the cooperative economy: results of the 2014 global census on cooperatives", paper produced for the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, April 2014.

⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO), "Cooperatives: resilient to crises, key to sustainable growth", 6 July 2012.

⁵ International Cooperative Alliance and European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises, "World cooperative monitor: exploring the cooperative economy, report 2016", September 2016.

⁶ Fredrick O. Wanyama, *Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Contribution to the Post-2015 Development Debate* (Geneva, ILO, 2014).

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The State of Food and Agriculture: Innovation in Family Farming* (Rome, 2014).

⁸ Consultative Group to Assist the Poor and World Bank Group, "Financial access 2010: the state of financial inclusion through the crisis", Washington, D.C., 2010.

78 million earn less than \$2 a day.⁹ In many developing countries, financial services in small villages are offered only by cooperatives.

9. Cooperative enterprises are well placed to connect the informal sector to the formal economy. People living in poverty generally lack knowledge and information about traditional loan and savings schemes and are therefore excluded from them. Financial cooperatives fill the gap by being responsive to members' needs, relaxing documentation and procedural requirements and introducing flexibility in managing finances. More importantly, their services prevent loan sharks from charging high interest rates that further impoverish people in the informal sector. Other types of cooperatives, such as workers' cooperatives, also play an important role in organizing self-employed and informal workers and marketing their products and services in the formal market. Such cooperatives are used as means for formalization by creating economies of scale and negotiation power with public and private sector actors.¹⁰

10. Cooperatives have an important impact on education, health care and basic services. They are involved in the direct provision of good-quality education by setting up their own schools and championing cooperative education in the education system in some countries. They also contribute to improvements in health outcomes through health-care cooperatives involved in home-care services, pharmacies, clinics and hospitals.

B. Cooperatives empower people and ensure inclusiveness and equality for peaceful societies

11. Across the globe, cooperatives and the wider social economy contribute about 7 per cent to the world's gross domestic product (GDP) and to global employment.¹¹ They play a particularly significant role in employment creation through the direct employment of people, the indirect promotion of employment by creating market opportunities and improving market conditions, and spillover effects to non-members.¹²

12. Cooperatives contribute to gender equality by expanding women's opportunities to participate in local economies and societies in many parts of the world. At the family level, women's membership in cooperatives translates into positive outcomes for girls, as the women usually invest in the education of their children.¹³ In Eastern Africa, women's participation in cooperatives is increasing rapidly, sometimes faster than men's. In Italy, Japan and Spain, women have a

⁹ Kevin C. Chua, "Cooperatives: engaging the community to address the challenges brought by the middle income status", paper presented at the regional forum on the theme "Journey to and from the middle income status — the challenges for public sector managers", organized by the Ministry of Finance of China, the Asia-Pacific Finance and Development Centre and the Asia-Pacific Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results, Shanghai, 22-25 April 2014.

¹⁰ ILO, "Cooperation in a changing world of work: exploring the role of cooperatives in the future of work", *Cooperatives and the World of Work No. 6* (Geneva, 2016).

¹¹ Jürgen Schwettmann, "The role of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: the economic dimension", paper presented at the expert group meeting of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the theme "The role of cooperatives in sustainable development for all: contributions, challenges and strategies", Nairobi, 8-10 December 2014.

¹² Patrick Develtere, Ignace Pollet and Fredrick Wanyama, eds., *Cooperating out of Poverty: The Renaissance of the African Cooperative Movement* (Geneva, ILO and World Bank Institute, 2008).

¹³ Eva Majurin, *How Women Fare in East African Cooperatives: The Case of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda* (Dar es Salaam, ILO, 2012).

strong presence in consumer- and worker-owned cooperatives. In Southern Asia, cooperatives formed by women provide employment opportunities, conducive to social inclusion and empowerment, to other women. In the Middle East, women-only cooperatives allow women to expand their access to economic opportunities and public life. Gender inequalities, however, persist, as women continue to be marginally represented in cooperative leadership and certain sectors, such as large financial cooperatives. Women are more present in savings and credit cooperatives, which offer a much-needed response to their financial needs. Women's cooperatives tend to be smaller in capital, membership and volume of business.¹⁴

13. Cooperatives have proved to be more resilient in times of economic and financial crisis than their corporate counterparts, making a critical contribution to sustaining employment and overall economic growth. As they are people-centred enterprises, cooperatives are willing to conduct business even at slim margins. During the recent global economic crisis, when most private corporations were downsizing and cutting jobs, many cooperatives were instead cutting profit, implementing shorter work-hours or alternate shifts and working with practical cost-reduction schemes to avoid laying off workers. For example, the Basque workers' cooperative network, Mondragon Corporation, asked its members to agree to forfeit or postpone entitlements and interest on individual capital accounts to mitigate the effects of the subdued market. One of the cooperatives in the network, Fagor Electrodomésticos, experienced heavy losses and filed for protection from creditors. True to its commitment to its member-workers, Mondragon Corporation transferred a total of 417 members to other cooperatives within two months of the declaration.¹⁵

14. Cooperatives can also contribute to the development of industry, innovation and infrastructure. The electrification of rural areas of the United States of America, for instance, illustrates how cooperatives brought electricity infrastructure to remote areas. In the early 1900s, private power companies refused to service rural farms, given the huge investment involved. In 1936, the Federal Government of the United States passed the Rural Electrification Act, which administered loan programmes, encouraging rural farmers to establish rural electric cooperatives. As a result, within four years of the end of the Second World War, the number of rural electric systems in operation had doubled, the number of consumers connected had more than tripled, and the miles of energized lines had increased more than fivefold.¹⁶

C. Cooperatives support transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

15. In addition to enabling disadvantaged members of society to participate more fully in social and economic life, thereby contributing to individual resilience and social cohesion, cooperatives also have the institutional mechanisms to mobilize large numbers of people to respond to environmental degradation. They can educate and raise awareness to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns and achieve economies of scale in promoting green technologies among members and clients. Agricultural cooperatives have been promoting biofuel production and development in Brazil, India and the United States as a low-cost energy source alternative. Meanwhile, renewable energy cooperatives recycle wind power in Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

¹⁴ Wanyama, *Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals*.

¹⁵ Leire Luengo, "The Mondragon Corporation has already relocated 417 worker-members from Fagor Electrodomésticos", *Cooperative News*, 9 January 2014.

¹⁶ National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, "History of electric co-ops". Available from www.electric.coop/our-organization/history/.

and use solar resources in Kenya and Zambia, offering a local option for clean energy (see A/70/161).

16. Because cooperatives operate at the local level, they can harness community involvement in and promote community acceptance of key decisions. Denmark is a world leader in renewable energy and is hailed as one of the most energy-efficient countries in the world.¹⁷ Renewable energy cooperatives have significantly contributed to the stability of the country's power sector, and more than 150,000 families are members of wind energy cooperatives that operate roughly three quarters of the country's wind turbines. Cooperatives have played an especially key role in promoting community acceptance by involving members in the planning and development stage, thereby overcoming the "not in my backyard" mentality, a problem often associated with wind farms.¹⁸

17. Cooperatives have a long-term perspective on investment in the community, which holds them accountable for the community assets and commits them to sustainability and social responsibility to safeguard the use thereof by the current and future generations.

18. Cooperatives provide forums in which people can collaborate on solutions to environmental challenges, manage resources responsibly and diversify into eco-friendly economic activities. In Costa Rica, Coopesilencio is an agricultural cooperative that was originally dedicated to grain crops and palm oil production and has since expanded into sustainable ecotourism and environmental protection. The cooperative is currently involved in both farming and community-based rural tourism, which has not only created employment opportunities and increased livelihood, but also preserved the natural environment.¹⁹

19. Agricultural cooperatives have sometimes been the avenue of choice for technology transfer from researchers to local farmers. For example, a joint study by Cornell and Stanford Universities found that farmers in the Yaqui Valley, Mexico, gained information on implementing new techniques from their local cooperatives or credit unions, rather than directly from scientists.²⁰

20. Likewise, agricultural cooperatives have been the means through which local farmers have been introduced to fair trade initiatives. For instance, many fair trade coffee roasters or retailers in the United States have their coffee beans grown and harvested by cooperatives in Latin America. The association of farmers in the South with cooperatives enables them to be involved in fair trade and to export and sell products to foreign wholesalers at above-market prices, improving their income potential.²¹

21. Cooperatives have also been active participants in South-South and triangular cooperation. An International Fund for Agricultural Development programme brings together young people and women in agricultural cooperatives in Algeria, Egypt,

¹⁷ United States of America, Chamber of Commerce, Institute for 21st Century Energy, "International index of energy security risk: assessing risk in a global energy market", Washington, D.C., 2012.

¹⁸ United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Department of Trade and Industry Global Watch Mission, "Cooperative energy: lessons from Denmark and Sweden", Pera Innovation Limited, 2005.

¹⁹ See www.uvm.edu/rsenr/rm230/costarica/websites/2006%20Silencio/coope.html.

²⁰ Ellen B. McCullough and Pamela A. Matson, "Evolution of the knowledge system for agricultural development in the Yaqui Valley, Sonora, Mexico", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 113, No. 17 (26 April 2016).

²¹ Patrick Develtere and Ignace Pollet, "Cooperatives and fair trade", background paper commissioned by the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives for the Open Forum of the Committee on Fair Trade and Cooperatives, Berlin, January 2005.

Morocco, Turkey and Uzbekistan to share innovative solutions to saving water, cultivating water-efficient crops, breeding cattle and building resilience. They also received valuable agricultural biotechnology inputs and knowledge from Hungary, highlighting the advantages of multi-stakeholder partnerships.²²

III. Institutional resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

22. In order to implement the ambitious 2030 Agenda, with its deep-rooted holistic vision for sustainable development that emphasizes transformative change, an integrated approach is required. Cooperative enterprises, with their principles and values of democratic participation, the centrality of the interests of their members and their concern for the community, embody the spirit of the new development agenda and can leverage their institutional resources in support thereof.

23. Indeed, in paragraph 67 of the 2030 Agenda, cooperatives were acknowledged as an integral part of the private sector, whose role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was highlighted as a driver of productivity and job creation.

24. As a business model and an institution, cooperatives have resources that include their activities as business enterprises, their organizational structures, their organizations at the local, subnational, national, regional and global levels, the processes that govern their operations and connect them, and their financial and human resources. Such resources can be mobilized in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

25. Cooperative enterprises operate under a cooperation network, decentralized at the household and community levels but centralized at the national and international levels through unions, federations and confederations. Unions and federations communicate with each other and share experience and know-how to deliver capacity-building. Such interlinkages enable development progress, beginning in local communities and extending all the way to the global forefront.

26. The previous section contains a summary of the direct and concrete contributions that cooperatives can make to the Sustainable Development Goals through their business operations and activities, by creating decent work opportunities, providing livelihoods and enabling access to essential social services, including for individuals belonging to disadvantaged social groups, and protecting the environment. The present section highlights the resources of the cooperative enterprise model at the community, national, regional and global levels. It focuses on cooperative resources, such as cooperatives and cooperative apex organizations, at the national, regional and global levels, the major events and processes of cooperatives, and their financial and human resources.

²² International Fund for Agricultural Development, "South-South and triangular cooperation: changing lives through partnership", Rome, December 2014.

A. Awareness-raising and building the connection between global goals and people's lives

27. According to a global census on cooperatives conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2014,²³ there were 2.6 million cooperatives employing 12.6 million workers worldwide. Those cooperative enterprises, large and small, operated approximately 770,000 offices and outlets employing people and servicing customers. Globally, there were more than 1 billion memberships²⁴ in cooperatives. Cooperative enterprises, their offices and outlets, in addition to their members, employees and customers, can be mobilized to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals at the grass-roots level and to promote local action to implement the globally agreed goals with more direct impact on the daily lives of people. Such action will help to translate global goals and targets into concrete results in people's lives, helping to build the connection between the Sustainable Development Goals and average citizens to garner their support. The same organizational network resources can also be integrated into the participatory monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, another channel to raise public awareness and promote action for implementation.

28. Organizations of cooperatives are another important institutional aspect of the cooperative movement that has great potential to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. National and international unions, federations and confederations of cooperatives can be the natural "focal points" of communication and mobilization for the 2030 Agenda. In fact, since the global consultation that led to the formulation and adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the related Sustainable Development Goals, cooperative organizations have been actively supporting the 2030 Agenda, by making pledges for the achievement of specific Goals and targets. For example, the International Cooperative Alliance²⁵ launched an online platform (www.coopsfor2030.coop) on the International Day of Cooperatives in 2016 for raising awareness and pledging actions and targets to contribute to the 169 targets associated with the Sustainable Development Goals. Through the platform, 80 cooperatives from 31 countries have made more than 167 pledges so far.²⁶ The Alliance also released "Sustainability reporting for cooperatives: a guidebook" to provide concrete guidance to large and small cooperatives on adopting a globally recognized system of sustainability reporting. Such initiatives by cooperative organizations are practical channels through which global goals are linked to local actions. They are also effective means of highlighting the dynamism and power of cooperatives beyond the sector and

²³ The census was a first-of-its-kind global survey of cooperatives that generated the most comprehensive data set on cooperatives. It was conducted with financial support from the Rabobank of the Netherlands as a follow-up to the International Year of Cooperatives in 2012, which identified systematic and comprehensive data as one of the priority areas for action to further promote the growth and advancement of cooperatives for social and economic development. The census gathered data from 145 countries. Data used in the present report are based on that census unless otherwise noted. A caveat of the data set is that, owing to technical reasons, specific figures should be viewed as the lower boundary estimates from the first attempt to gather global data on cooperatives.

²⁴ Membership rather than the number of individual members is considered a better measurement of population participation in cooperatives, although both indicators could have double accounting, as one person can be a member of more than one cooperative. Conversely, one membership can represent more than one individual member, as a family may register one membership.

²⁵ The International Cooperative Alliance was established in 1895 to unite, represent and serve cooperatives worldwide. The Alliance's membership comprises national and international cooperative organizations from more than 100 countries.

²⁶ International Cooperative Alliance, "Co-ops for 2030: a movement achieving sustainable development for all", annual report, Vol. 1 (July 2017).

communities in which they operate to raise their visibility, while enabling national Governments and the international community to better harness the contribution of cooperatives to implement the 2030 Agenda and monitor progress.

B. Financial inclusion and entrepreneurship to leave no one behind

29. Financing is critical to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and financial inclusion is fundamental to the inclusive growth that is a prerequisite to the fulfilment of the pledge to leave no one behind. In this context, implementing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development is essential to the 2030 Agenda, as stated in paragraph 40 of the latter.

30. The global census on cooperatives estimates that, as at 2014, there were close to 211,000 cooperative banks and credit unions worldwide, with more than 700 million members or clients and total assets in excess of \$11 trillion, generating more than \$167 million in annual gross revenues. This makes cooperative financial institutions significant players in the financing of sustainable development.

31. More importantly, cooperative banks and credit unions, together with smaller savings and credit cooperatives, play a critical role in promoting financial inclusion for more inclusive sustainable development, a role that is more than represented by the overall number of institutions or number of clients, given the emphasis placed by cooperatives on the interests of the community and their members. Many of the members or clients of cooperative banks, credit unions and other financial cooperatives are within segments of the population that are traditionally left without access to financial services, including people in poverty, small-scale producers in rural areas and women.²⁷ This particular contribution of cooperatives to financial inclusion is clearly acknowledged in paragraph 43 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda: "We recognize that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly those that are women-owned, often have difficulty in obtaining financing ... National development banks, credit unions and other domestic financial institutions can play a vital role in providing access to financial services."

32. Entrepreneurship embedded in cooperative enterprises and democratic governance practices are another resource that can be harnessed for the 2030 Agenda. It is clearly stated that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires broad partnerships between the public and private sectors, as the latter is the driver of productivity and job creation. Cooperatives, as private enterprises, have the advantage by virtue of their values and principles that emphasize democratic governance and solidarity. The human and social capital of cooperatives has great potential to foster entrepreneurship, with positive spillovers into the community and society at large to benefit traditionally marginalized groups in society. Membership and involvement in cooperative affairs often serve as a "training ground" for participatory processes that promote social and political empowerment, which is also integral to the effective implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and to ensuring the realization of its inclusive vision.

²⁷ Not all countries provided disaggregated data on members or clients. It is widely acknowledged in case studies and literature on financial inclusion that women and people living in poverty are unserved by commercial financial institutions.

IV. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the least developed countries and cooperatives

33. The least developed countries comprise 48 United Nations Member States, most of which are in sub-Saharan Africa (34), with the remaining in Asia and the Pacific (13) and the Caribbean (1). As the "poorest and weakest segment" of the international community, the least developed countries are the archetype of those left behind.²⁸ Despite representing approximately 12 per cent of the world's population, they account for less than 2 per cent of the world's GDP. The incomes of their citizens are not only low on average but also unequally distributed. Their economies are largely agrarian and characterized by low levels of productivity and investment. They are vulnerable to external shocks because they rely strongly on exports of primary commodities. Only a small number of those countries have been able to diversify into the manufacturing sector, mainly in labour-intensive industries, such as textiles and clothing. In addition, they have very low levels of both social development, characterized by weak human and institutional capacities, and domestic resource mobilization.

34. The 2030 Agenda pledges that no Sustainable Development Goal will be considered to have been met unless it is achieved for all people in all countries. Achieving the Goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda in the least developed countries is therefore critical to the successful implementation of the Agenda globally, in addition to fulfilling its promise of prosperity for all. In this regard, examining the role of cooperatives in assisting the least developed countries in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals takes on particular importance.

35. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the preceding Istanbul Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, have clear priority areas to achieve lasting social progress in the least developed countries. First, the least developed countries need to undergo structural transformation, that is, experience rapid and inclusive economic growth, as well as changes in the sectoral composition of their economies. Second, they need to build or develop their productive capacities through education, the empowerment of women, decent work and good health, among others.

A. Development challenges in the least developed countries

36. The least developed countries continue to face challenges in achieving economic and social development objectives. On average, economic growth, which is needed to generate resources for achieving structural transformation and building productive capacities, has slowed in those countries since 2012 to a rate of 3.6 per cent per annum in 2015, far below the target of at least 7 per cent per annum recommended by the Programme of Action.²⁸ The sharp decline in commodity prices, which has particularly affected the commodity-exporting least developed countries in Africa, is the main reason behind such poor performance.

37. The least developed countries have made limited progress towards achieving positive structural transformation. The share of the agricultural sector in GDP of the least developed countries as a group declined gradually, from 27.1 per cent in 2001-2010 to 25.2 per cent in 2011, mainly as a result of trends in the least developed

²⁸ *The Least Developed Countries Report 2016: The Path to Graduation and Beyond — Making the Most of the Process* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.II.D.9).

countries in Asia.²⁹ However, the share of the manufacturing sector stagnated around 11.5 per cent in 2001-2010 and in 2011-2014.³⁰ By contrast, the share of the mining sector in GDP expanded, especially in the least developed countries in Africa, from 14.0 per cent in 2001-2010 to 16.3 per cent in 2011.²⁹ Unfortunately, the least developed countries that relied on extractive sector revenues (oil, gas and minerals) have recently been hit hard by high inequality, as the sector tends to benefit primarily the richest, and dramatic falls in the global demand for and prices of commodities. Furthermore, despite the declining share of agriculture in GDP of the least developed countries, a large section of the labour force, 64.1 per cent in 2012, continues to be engaged in the agricultural sector, which implies high underemployment in that sector.

38. In terms of social and human development, the least developed countries have made moderate progress. Poverty remains high and most pervasive in those countries, demonstrated by the fact that 51 per cent of their total population, approximately 400 million people, were still living in extreme poverty in 2016.³¹ Similarly, undernourishment has decreased very slowly in those countries, such that one in four people were still undernourished in 2015, and the number of undernourished people has even increased.³² Primary education has also seen progress in the least developed countries. The net enrolment rate in primary education rose from 56 per cent in 1995 to 82 per cent in 2014.

39. Unemployment appears low in the least developed countries, at a rate of between 5 and 6 per cent since the 1990s. However, underemployment is prevalent: in 2016, 40 per cent of workers worked less than 35 hours a week. Furthermore, the majority of workers are engaged in informal employment, and only 6 per cent of all workers are covered by labour laws and social protection through written contracts. With a rate that is twice as high as the adult unemployment rate, youth unemployment is also a great challenge in the least developed countries. In many of them, over half of the population of young people are in informal employment.³¹ In addition, young people face considerable difficulty in finding decent and secure employment, partly because of a mismatch between skills and labour market needs.

40. Women in the least developed countries continue to face the worst disadvantages with respect to access to education, the labour market, productive resources and markets. At 0.57, the United Nations gender inequality index for the least developed countries in 2015 was higher than that for developing countries as a whole (0.45).³³

B. Contribution of cooperatives to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries

41. As organizations that endeavour to promote economic progress while satisfying the sociocultural needs of their members, cooperatives are highly relevant and important in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries.

²⁹ LDC IV Monitor, *Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs (2011-2020): Monitoring Deliverables, Tracking Progress — Analytical Perspectives* (London, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2014).

³⁰ Shifaana Thowfeeq, "The development challenges of LDCs", presentation made at the expert group meeting on the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind: the cooperative sector as a partner in the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", New York, 16-17 November 2016.

³¹ United Nations, "State of the least developed countries 2016", 2016.

³² World Bank, World Bank Open Data. Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/>.

³³ *The Least Developed Countries Report 2016*.

42. The agricultural sector contributes a high proportion of GDP and an even greater share of employment in the least developed countries. Agricultural cooperatives have been effective at reducing poverty in the least developed countries, by bringing about output and income growth and creating sustainable rural employment therein. They have also created more equitable growth, by helping their members to access finance, inputs, equipment, new technologies, training, information and markets and by strengthening the bargaining power and competitiveness of small producers through economies of scale. In Rwanda, for instance, membership in an agricultural cooperative significantly contributed to farmers' welfare, by improving their income by more than 40 per cent.³⁴ In Nepal, farmers who were affiliated with a cooperative had higher bargaining power and sold their produce at higher prices (by 16.40 rupees per kilogram). At the same time, cooperatives reduced marketing costs, such as transportation and commission costs, for the benefit of their members.³⁵

43. Agricultural cooperatives have also played a significant role in ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition in rural areas of least developed countries, by helping small farmers to overcome the numerous obstacles that they confront, such as remoteness and a lack of access to information about food prices, high-quality inputs and loans, and by building their skills and providing them with knowledge and information.³⁶ In the United Republic of Tanzania, for instance, agricultural cooperatives have created access to such products as maize, milk and coffee.³⁷ In Cameroon, the Cooperative des éleveurs de vaches laitières de Foubat, a dairy farmer cooperative, contributes to food security and higher family income through increased crop yields and the diversification of the food supply. When members applied the technical training that they had received on how to improve farming practices by fertilizing the land with cow dung harvested from the dairy farms, their food crop yields increased substantially. Within six months, average production had increased from 976 pounds to 5,500 pounds for maize, from 423 pounds to 754 pounds for beans and from 661 pounds to 1,219 pounds for potatoes. The members were also able to increase family consumption of fresh milk and supply large quantities of milk to the cooperative every day for marketing.³⁸

44. Financial cooperatives have contributed to ensuring inclusive and equitable access to quality education. In many of the least developed countries, loans from savings and credit cooperatives have enabled children of members to access good-quality education and thus promoted lifelong learning opportunities for generations. In Ethiopia, for instance, rebates from fair trade have been used by cooperatives to financially support the social infrastructure of primary schools. In the United Republic of Tanzania, cooperatives have established good-quality education institutions in remote areas.³⁹

³⁴ Ellen Verhofstadt and Miet Maertens, "Can agricultural cooperatives reduce poverty? Heterogeneous impact of cooperative membership on farmers' welfare in Rwanda", Biometrics Working Paper Series, No. 2014/2 (University of Leuven, 2014).

³⁵ Poudel Niroja, Itabashi Mamoru and Yukio Muto, "Marketing system of agricultural cooperatives in Nepal", *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, vol. 4, No. 4 (October 2015).

³⁶ Wanyama, *Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals*.

³⁷ Esther Gicheru, "The role of the cooperative enterprise model in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries", paper presented at the expert group meeting on "Ensuring that no one is left behind: the cooperative sector as a partner in the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", New York, 16-17 November 2016.

³⁸ Aaron Kaah, "Dairy farmer cooperative contributes to food security in Cameroon", Heifer International, 12 October 2012.

³⁹ Gicheru, "The role of the cooperative enterprise model".

45. Cooperatives have been an effective platform for the socioeconomic empowerment of women. Membership in cooperatives is growing for women and their access to leadership is increasingly open. In Uganda, for instance, the participation of women in agricultural cooperatives is increasing faster than that of men. In the United Republic of Tanzania, women have been empowered to take leadership positions in cooperatives.³⁹ In Rwanda, coffee cooperatives have played an important role in the creation of employment, and thus in access to income, for women in rural areas. Coffee cooperatives have trained men and women to share income equally, especially coffee revenue, thus contributing to gender equality. These cooperatives have taught women how to save and invest the sales from coffee and to open and maintain bank accounts, all of which has contributed to their empowerment, because they were given a chance to think about the future.⁴⁰

46. Cooperatives have helped to reduce inequality within and among countries, as equality is a universal value upheld by all cooperatives. By promoting more inclusive and equitable growth, cooperatives contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequality in the least developed countries, which, in turn, can help to reduce the gap between the least developed countries and other developing countries.

V. Strategies for strengthening the contribution of cooperatives to the achievement of sustainable development for all

47. In order to effectively leverage the potential contribution of cooperatives to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals everywhere, some challenges remain that must be addressed. While some of the challenges are internal to the cooperative model, others relate to external environments and require support from Governments. Some strategies to overcome the key challenges are highlighted below.

A. Increase awareness of the role of cooperatives in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals

48. By nature, most cooperatives are locally based, independently operated business enterprises. Consequently, the benefits and impact of cooperatives are not well known beyond the communities in which they operate. There is a general lack of awareness on the part of the public of the contributions of cooperatives to social and economic development. At the same time, cooperative members and employees may not be aware of the international development goals adopted far away in the meeting halls of global organizations. This two-way lack of awareness undermines the potential of cooperatives, which can and should be realized for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also misses an opportunity to link internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, to the daily lives of people and the operations of cooperatives.

49. Similarly, education and information about cooperatives are non-existent or inadequate in the communities in which they could make a real difference. For example, many people, especially people living in poverty, are not aware of the benefits of becoming members of cooperatives.

⁴⁰ M. Ya-Bititi Gisaro, "Coffee cooperatives and women's empowerment in Rwanda's rural areas: a case study of KOAKAKA coffee cooperative in Rwanda", paper presented at the Cooperatives and the World of Work Research Conference, co-hosted by the International Cooperative Alliance and ILO, Antalya, Turkey, 8-10 November 2015.

50. In order to strengthen the contribution of cooperatives to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, strategies for communication and education on cooperatives are needed. On the one hand, cooperatives and their organizations could be encouraged to organize town hall meetings, workshops and seminars to disseminate information on the practical benefits of forming cooperatives. They could also intensify collaboration with educational institutions at all levels to include practical information on cooperatives in school curriculums. In this regard, the platforms and opportunities afforded by the spread of new information and communications technologies are being utilized by cooperatives and their organizations to overcome information challenges (see sect. III of the present report). On the other hand, Governments should complement the efforts of cooperatives by facilitating outreach to the public through governmental channels and supporting the inclusion of information on cooperatives in the curriculum of public schools. Governments could also encourage the creation of cooperatives, for example financial cooperatives, in particular savings and credit cooperatives, in close proximity to communities to help to demonstrate the transformational power of cooperatives in social and economic development.

B. Generate consistent data to support evidence-based research, especially with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals

51. One aspect of effective awareness-raising to promote the role of cooperatives in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is to gather timely, comprehensive and consistent data that will demonstrate cooperatives' actual impact on and contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their contribution thereto. Such data will also be necessary for comparative analyses of the advantages and disadvantages of different enterprise governance models, to generate evidence-based data and knowledge for better policy design. Therefore, international guidelines on cooperative statistics need to be developed.

52. In this regard, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has initiated an inter-agency effort to meet that need. Building on the first-ever global census on cooperatives, undertaken by the Department in 2014, the international Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives⁴¹ has formed a working group to develop guidelines on cooperative statistics. The Committee has also actively promoted the sharing of good practices among national statistical offices, cooperative practitioners and researchers to advance work on cooperative statistics.

C. Establish effective policies, laws and regulations

53. As business enterprises, cooperatives need an enabling environment in order to thrive. The reality, however, is that many countries do not have a legal and legislative framework that recognizes the special values and identity of cooperatives. In other countries, cooperatives are governed by weak and outdated legislation and regulations and suffer from a lack of understanding on the part of those in charge of implementing and upholding cooperative laws. As a result, cooperatives are disadvantaged as enterprises.

54. Governments should first recognize cooperatives as development partners, while acknowledging and supporting the contributions of cooperatives to the community and society at large beyond their role as businesses. Governments

⁴¹ The Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives consists of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, FAO, ILO, the International Cooperative Alliance and the World Farmers' Organization.

should invest in renewing cooperative laws, especially in the areas of access to capital, competitiveness and fair taxation, in accordance with the changing business environment. It is also important that Governments devote resources to building the capacity of the people responsible for implementing the laws. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has provided capacity-building support to the least developed countries in reviewing national legal and legislative frameworks and in establishing legislation and regulations specific to financial cooperatives. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in partnership with the International Cooperative Alliance, is engaged in ongoing work to develop a global database and an online platform on cooperative law to gather evidence for the analysis of the impact of the institutional environment for cooperatives on their performance in developing countries.

D. Build the capacity of cooperatives to participate in sustainable development processes at the national, regional and international levels

55. Many cooperatives suffer from a lack of human capital in cooperative management, which is particularly acute in small cooperatives. Governments and cooperative organizations should therefore invest in training for managers of primary societies, including in providing high-quality cooperative training in vocational schools and tertiary education. The training of female managers is particularly important, given the limited engagement of women, compared with that of men, in cooperatives due to gender inequalities in literacy levels, skills, land ownership and access to credit and information. Supporting the inclusion of youth leaders in the cooperative movement is equally important, as young people are overrepresented among the unemployed. As at 2016, young people accounted for more than 35 per cent of unemployed people globally, despite representing just over 15 per cent of the world's labour force and 21 per cent of the global working-age population.⁴²

56. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized expert meetings to share good practices in the promotion of cooperatives. Within its limited resources, the Department also invited participants from the least developed countries to such meetings for mutual learning. It also mobilized resources for a capacity-building workshop for government officials responsible for cooperatives and cooperative practitioners from developing countries, especially the least developed countries, to strengthen capacities to promote cooperatives, with the aim of further leveraging the contributions of cooperatives for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

57. Encouraging cooperation among cooperatives is another strategy to strengthen their capacity. In this regard, national and international organizations of cooperatives and sectoral cooperative societies are already playing an important role. National Governments and international organizations, such as the United Nations, can invest in and facilitate such private sector initiatives to strengthen public-private partnerships for the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as the focal point on cooperative issues, is committed to leveraging its convening power and its role as a global forum to further facilitate cooperation and partnerships involving cooperatives.

⁴² ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2016* (Geneva, 2016).

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

58. The ambitious 2030 Agenda is built on a holistic vision for people, prosperity and the planet that emphasizes inclusive and sustainable development that is transformational to ensure that no one is left behind. The cooperative narrative shows that the cooperative model, with its core value of solidarity, is an important partner in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and enriching the spirit and outcomes of the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda. Cooperatives are vital instruments that are natural allies of the Agenda, with the theme of leaving no one and no country behind. Cooperatives have been recognized as one of the key actors to implement the Agenda. It is therefore important to further integrate them into the multi-stakeholder partnerships that are being formed for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

59. Cooperative enterprises have a strong potential to alleviate poverty and hunger, stimulate economic growth, create employment and decent work opportunities, build social capital, address inequality and empower women. Such power of cooperatives is particularly important for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries. The institutional resources of cooperatives are also significant and can be actively leveraged for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the community, local, national and international levels.

60. With a view to further promoting the development of cooperatives in all countries in order to harness cooperatives' invaluable contribution to social development, and thus to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Governments should review existing legislation and regulations to make the national legal and regulatory environment more conducive to the creation and growth of cooperatives, by improving existing laws and regulations and/or by establishing new ones, especially with regard to access to capital, competitiveness and fair taxation;

(b) In order to support evidence-based national strategies and policies and to strengthen the contribution of cooperatives to the 2030 Agenda, there is an urgent need to develop and harmonize a statistical framework for the systematic collection of comprehensive data on cooperatives and to promote and disseminate evidence-based research on cooperatives. International institutions, such as the United Nations, and government authorities should support and collaborate with the cooperative movement to standardize statistical definition and collection relating to cooperatives and promote research;

(c) The international community, national Governments and the cooperative movement should work jointly to raise awareness of the contribution of cooperatives to sustainable development, especially in areas relating to those Sustainable Development Goals on social inclusion, employment creation, poverty eradication and inequality reduction;

(d) Given the potential of cooperatives to contribute to overcoming development challenges in the least developed countries, most of which are in Africa, the international community and the cooperative movement should support Governments of the least developed countries in creating a favourable environment for cooperative growth and encouraging greater networking and capacity-building among cooperatives to reap the power of cooperatives for social and economic development. Emphasis should be placed on rural

development and on increasing the participation of young people, women and girls, especially in the leadership of cooperatives;

(e) In order to maximize the contribution of cooperatives to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in the least developed countries, the United Nations system should continue to provide technical support and capacity-building assistance to cooperatives and national Governments. The United Nations system should also continue to use its advantage as an international platform for collaboration and exchange to facilitate the sharing of good practices by all partners and cooperation among cooperatives.

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Sustainable development**Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and
modern energy for all****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

In the present report, the Secretary-General provides an overview of the progress made towards ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and highlights activities undertaken by a wide range of stakeholders to accelerate the achievement of that objective, including action by Member States and efforts by the United Nations system and international organizations. Submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/233, the report describes possible ways to strengthen both intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination and institutional support on energy issues in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including in support of the first global review of Goal 7 of the Sustainable Development Goals leading up to the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in 2018.

* A/72/150.



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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/233, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution at its seventy-second session and, within existing resources, to make concrete proposals on the strengthening, through existing arrangements, of both inter-agency and intergovernmental coordination and institutional support on energy issues, and to give appropriate consideration to progress on sustainable energy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Energy in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2. In September 2015, in its resolution 70/1, the General Assembly adopted a new, groundbreaking agenda to guide development efforts during the period 2015-2030. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, which jointly constitute a comprehensive plan of action to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development.

3. The Sustainable Development Goals are comprehensive, universal and interlinked and cut across all dimensions of sustainable development. They need to be pursued according to national priorities, needs, institutional structures and the financing mix available in each unique circumstance. Integrated planning, strategic thinking, policy integration and multi-stakeholder action will be crucial if countries are to be able to deliver on the Goals on the ground.

4. Under the 2030 Agenda, in recognition of the importance of energy for sustainable development, Sustainable Development Goal 7 was established as the first-ever universal goal on energy, with five targets pertaining to access, efficiency, renewables and means of implementation. Goal 7 represents a significant milestone, especially since the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000, did not include an energy goal. For the first time, energy is being recognized as a core part of the global sustainable development agenda of the United Nations system.

5. Energy is inextricably interlinked to many Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty eradication, food security, clean water and sanitation, health, education, prosperity, job creation and the empowerment of youth and women. Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all is fundamental to human development. A shift towards sustainable energy solutions is also essential to the achievement of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

6. The ambitious 2030 Agenda, including the goal and targets on energy, contains a call for an equally ambitious means of implementation to achieve sustainable development, including enabling environments, effective institutions, technology transfer, capacity-building, scaled-up financing and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

7. A robust, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework is crucial for helping countries to implement the 2030 Agenda. To maximize and track global progress towards the goals and targets, the General Assembly adopted, in its resolution 71/313, the global indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda, developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, including indicators related to Goal 7 (see table below), as agreed upon by the Statistical Commission in its report of March 2017 (E/2017/24), subject to future refinements and improvements.

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

<i>Targets</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services	7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity 7.1.2 Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology
7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix	7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption
7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency	7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and gross domestic product (GDP)
7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology	7.a.1 International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean energy research and development and renewable energy production, including in hybrid systems
7.b By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support	7.b.1 Investments in energy efficiency as a proportion of GDP and the amount of foreign direct investment in financial transfer for infrastructure and technology to sustainable development services

III. Progress towards ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

8. This section presents an overview of the progress made towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7, based on the report *Sustainable Energy for All Global Tracking Framework: Progress towards Sustainable Energy 2017*, compiled by the World Bank and the International Energy Agency in collaboration with many other international organizations.

9. Leadership actions by Member States contributing to the achievement of Goal 7 are also highlighted, based on the input received by the Secretariat from Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Cuba, Germany, Guatemala, India, Italy, Mexico, Monaco, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and Slovakia.

10. The section also presents an overview of actions taken by the United Nations system and other international organizations to support Member States as they deliver on the 2030 Agenda, particularly in support of Goal 7 targets and their means of implementation. Highlights of the contributions of each organization are included, including efforts to provide policy support, strengthen capacity-building, facilitate international cooperation, undertake advocacy, catalyse partnerships and support efforts by countries to develop strategies to finance their implementation of Goal 7.

A. Overview

11. While a significant number of countries around the world are demonstrating accelerated progress, the current pace of progress, on a global scale, still falls short of what is needed to meet the Goal 7 targets on energy access, renewable energy and energy efficiency by 2030.

Access to electricity

12. The share of the global population with access to electricity rose from 85.0 per cent in 2012 to 85.3 per cent in 2014, for an annual increase of 0.19 percentage points, much slower than the annual rate of 0.92 percentage points required to meet the universal access to electricity objective by 2030.

13. The global access deficit, which is the number of people without electricity worldwide, fell only slightly, from 1.063 billion in 2012 to 1.061 billion in 2014. In absolute terms, 86.5 million people per year gained access to electricity during this period.

14. Electricity access in urban areas increased faster than in rural areas, with 0.16 percentage points added to the urban access rate but only 0.05 percentage points to the rural access rate each year. The global urban access rate was 96.3 per cent in 2014, while the rural rate was 73.0 per cent.

15. All regions have made steady progress towards universal access to electricity except Africa, where just under 50 per cent of the population had access to electricity in 2014. The Asia-Pacific region had the second-lowest access rate, with 90.3 per cent electrification in 2014 and 421.4 million people without access. The Arab region ranked just slightly ahead, at 90.4 per cent, although its population without access was much smaller, numbering 35.8 million. The Latin America and Caribbean region reached 97 per cent access, the closest to universal access after the region encompassing Europe, North America and Central Asia.

16. Africa is the only region where electrification progress falls short of demographic growth, and the pace needs to accelerate more drastically if the continent is to reach universal access by 2030. All other regions are making progress towards universal electrification, although closing the final electricity access gap is posing considerable challenges in all regions.

Access to clean fuels and technology

17. The share of the global population with access to clean cooking fuels and technology edged up from 56.5 per cent in 2012 to 57.4 per cent in 2014. Yet, 3.04 billion people in the world still did not have access to clean cooking in 2014.

18. Africa, with 850.3 million people lacking access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking in 2014, had the lowest access rate among all the regions. The Asia-Pacific region also lagged far behind: almost half of its population, 2.1 billion, had no access to clean cooking in 2014. The continent's total population grew 3.5 times faster than its population with access to clean cooking in the period 2012-2014. Efforts by the Asia-Pacific region in the period 2012-2014 were much stronger, with access growing by 0.8 percentage points and the increase in access outpacing the increase in population. In the Arab region and in Latin America and the Caribbean, progress slowed over the past few recent years as both regions approached universal access, with diminishing returns constraining further expansion efforts.

Renewable energy

19. The share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption worldwide increased from 17.91 per cent in 2012 to 18.33 per cent in 2014, reflecting an increase of 0.21 percentage points in each of those two years. This is far below the 0.92 percentage points required annually to double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030.

20. The growth in renewable energy consumption during the period 2012-2014 came disproportionately from two energy end-use sectors, electricity and transport; renewable energy consumption in the heat sector grew at a significantly slower rate. This is a major concern, given that heat is the largest of the energy end uses, as well as the most challenging to decarbonize.

21. Among the various renewable energy technologies, solar photovoltaics and wind utilized for electricity generation experienced by far the most rapid growth rates, more than doubling during the period 2012-2014.

22. Modern renewable energy sources, excluding traditional biomass, are increasingly attracting attention in terms of policy. Between 1990 and 2014, Latin America and the Caribbean had, by far, the largest proportion of modern renewable energy consumption as part of its total energy consumption, reaching 22.9 per cent in 2014. As a group, Europe, North America and Central Asia ranked second, rising to 11.1 per cent in 2014 as a result of aggressive modern renewable energy policies and targets. Africa, at 8.1 per cent, and the Asia-Pacific region, at 6.8 per cent, also achieved strong growth in 2014. The Arab region finished 2014 with the lowest share, a mere 1.8 per cent, continuing its steady decline since 1990.

23. Traditional biomass continued to overshadow other sources of renewable energy in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. In Africa, traditional renewable energy represented over 85 per cent of renewable energy consumption in 2014. In the Asia-Pacific region, that share was 63.1 per cent.

Energy efficiency

24. Global primary energy intensity continued to show improvement. During the period 2012-2014, it declined at an average rate of 2.1 per cent per year globally. Still, this falls short of the rate of 2.8 per cent per year needed to achieve target 7.3, on energy efficiency, by 2030.

25. Globally, improvements resulted in a reduction in energy consumption by nearly 12 exajoules in the period 2012-2014, equivalent to the combined final energy consumption of Brazil and Pakistan in 2014.

26. Policies on industry, transport and buildings have been key drivers of those reductions in energy intensity. The amount of total final energy consumption worldwide covered by mandatory energy efficiency policies grew from 11 per cent in 2000 to 29 per cent in 2014. Most of the savings came from the industrial and transport sectors, particularly in China, India and Nigeria.

27. Europe, North America and Central Asia have all decoupled energy demand growth from gross domestic product (GDP) growth. The Asia-Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions both achieved decoupling in the early 1990s, and Africa did so in the early 2000s, although absolute energy consumption continued to grow, reflecting relatively low per capita energy consumption. In the Arab region, the decoupling of energy demand from GDP has been a growing trend.

Investment

28. The International Energy Agency estimates that, to achieve universal electricity access and clean cooking solutions, investments of \$45 billion per year would be needed, compared with actual investment flows estimated at \$9 billion per year.

29. Renewable energy investments averaged \$283 billion per year during the period 2010-2015, according to the International Energy Agency. Doubling the global share of renewable energy could cost an average of \$770 billion per year, according to an estimate by the International Renewable Energy Agency.¹

30. The global investment in energy efficiency grew to \$221 billion in 2015, according to the International Energy Agency. To meet target 7.3 on energy efficiency, an estimated investment of \$560 billion per year would be required globally, according to the second edition of the *Global Tracking Framework*, issued in 2015.

B. Member States

Argentina

31. Argentina is committed to the development of public policies aimed at ensuring access to affordable, sustainable and modern energy, promoting energy efficiency, developing adequate low-carbon infrastructure and reducing inefficient fossil fuel subsidies in line with the global agreements achieved in recent years, namely, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the action plan on climate and energy for growth issued by the Group of 20 at its summit held in Hamburg, Germany, in July 2017. Advancing the implementation of the country's national determined contribution plays a critical role in scaling up sustainable energy solutions.

Austria

32. Austria is increasing energy access, renewable energy and energy efficiency in partnership with various stakeholders. The Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres, jointly facilitated by Austria and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), contributes to increased regional cooperation and capacities in renewable energy and energy efficiency investments, markets and industries in West Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and other regions. In cooperation with UNIDO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), a network of national cleaner production centres develop pilot preventive environmental strategies in key developing and middle-income countries.

33. In May 2017, the Vienna Energy Forum brought together over 1,700 partners under the theme of "Sustainable energy for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement", highlighting energy innovation and its nexus with other development issues.

34. Austria supports Sustainable Energy for All, a quasi-international organization established and governed according to Austrian law as a special type of international non-governmental organization with certain fiscal and labour-related privileges. The organization forms an integral part of the Vienna energy hub.

¹ International Renewable Energy Agency, *REmap: Road Map for a Renewable Energy Future*, 2016 edition (Abu Dhabi).

Azerbaijan

35. Azerbaijan is making strides in the area of renewable energy. At present, about 17.6 per cent of its power generation is based on alternative and renewable energy sources: 1,157 MW from hydroelectric power, 32 MW from solar power, 66 MW from wind power and 38 MW from biomass and waste. The country intends to reach 20 per cent by 2020, 25 per cent by 2025 and, eventually, 50 per cent by 2050. Since 2009, 10 new hydroelectric power plants, 6 wind power plants and 5 solar power plants have been built, while solar panels and heating pumps have been installed at 30 social facilities in various regions of the country by State and private enterprises. Azerbaijan has also declared, as a voluntary target, its intention to reduce carbon emissions by 35 per cent by 2030 as compared with its 1990 levels. The action plan contained in the country's strategic road map forecasts the creation of 420 MW in new generating capacity from renewable sources by 2020 and the creation of 270 new jobs.

Belarus

36. Belarus is committed to increasing the share of its renewable energy sources through the implementation of energy technologies, including solar energy, wind energy, hydropower, biomass and thermal energy. The national strategy for sustainable socioeconomic development for the period up to 2030 is aimed at increasing the share of primary energy production from renewable energy sources in the energy mix to 6 per cent by 2020, 7 per cent by 2025 and 8 per cent by 2030. In 2016, a preliminary estimate of that share was 5.9 per cent. In the period 2015-2016, Belarus installed facilities with capacity for 113 MW from renewable energy, exceeding the total capacity of the power plants built in the previous 20 years.

Cuba

37. Cuba is committed to contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 7. Cuba has achieved the high electricity access rate of 99.5 per cent. There is an ongoing programme to provide electricity to some 20,000 households in remote areas. One of the country's key policy objectives is to increase the proportion of renewable energy sources in the country's electricity production mix to 24 per cent by 2030, thereby contributing to the generation of 7,245 GWh per year from renewable energy sources, which would replace the 1.7 million tons of fossil fuels consumed annually, in addition to cutting carbon dioxide emissions by over 6 million tons per year.

38. With regard to renewable energy, the goal is to install 2,144 MW in new electric power capacity through the construction of 19 biomass power plants, 13 wind farms, several solar photovoltaic farms and 74 small hydroelectric power plants. With respect to energy efficiency, measures include the replacement of fluorescent lamps with LED lighting in the residential sector (buildings), the improvement of cookstoves in the residential sector, the installation of new LED street lighting systems, the installation of solar heating systems, the introduction of more efficient technologies and the use of less-polluting energy sources, such as natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas.

39. Cuba ratified the Paris Agreement on 28 December 2016 and has recently adopted a national climate action plan, which includes a programme of progressive investments in the short (2020), medium (2030), long (2050) and very long (2100) terms.

Germany

40. The national energy transition project of Germany, *Energiewende*, can be regarded as the country's contribution to the decarbonization of the world economy. Within the framework of the *Energiewende* project, Germany has set itself very ambitious targets, such as abandoning nuclear power by 2022, increasing the share of renewable energies in its electricity supply to 80 per cent by 2050 and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 to 90 per cent by 2050 (compared with 1990). At the time of reporting, the share of nuclear power in the country's electricity mix had decreased to about 13 per cent, approximately 33 per cent of electricity production in Germany stemmed from renewable sources, and, by 2015, emissions had shrunk by 27 per cent over 1990 levels.

41. In its international cooperation efforts, Germany places priority on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7. Those efforts include support for the Group of Seven, the Group of 20, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Sustainable Energy for All organization, the Clean Energy Ministerial forum, the Africa-European Union Energy Partnership, the multi-stakeholder Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century and its International Renewable Energy Conferences, the International Energy Agency, the Energizing Development Partnership, the African-led Africa Renewable Energy Initiative and the European Union Energy Initiative Partnership Dialogue Facility.

Guatemala

42. From 2011 to 2016, Guatemala increased the volume of electricity it generated from renewable sources from 8,147 GWh to 10,878 GWh, accounting for some 60 per cent of its total production. While hydropower represents around a third of overall renewable energy, the share of thermal and biomass energy, among other sources, is growing rapidly. Guatemala is also making progress on energy access. In 2016, access to electricity climbed to 92 per cent, compared with 84 per cent in 2011.

India

43. At the time of reporting, India still had an estimated 240 million people lacking access to electricity, with 74 per cent of rural households having been electrified. The Government aims to provide a reliable supply of electricity 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to its citizens by 2022. It also intends to electrify all of its census villages by 2019. The Government has a major target of ensuring a universal supply of clean cooking fuel for urban and rural households and has made significant progress in that direction.

44. India is making ambitious efforts to achieve its renewable energy targets. It is committed to generating 40 per cent of its cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil-based energy sources by 2030. The country has set for itself a target of 175 GW in renewable energy (grid-connected) by 2022.

45. Energy efficiency policies in India are growing in scope and importance. The country is working to develop an energy efficiency index to rank its states on the basis of energy efficiency. Various innovative demand-side policy measures are also being considered to promote the efficient use of energy. India is implementing the world's largest LED distribution programme, aimed at promoting the efficient use of energy at the residential level. Over 230 million LED bulbs have already been distributed under the programme, with a total of 770 million inefficient bulbs expected to be replaced by 2019. In addition, a national street light programme is

being implemented to replace 35 million conventional street lights with LED lighting.

46. The recent ratification by India of the Paris Agreement underlined the country's commitment to ensuring a growing role for low-carbon sources of energy, led by solar and wind power. The intended nationally determined contributions of India include the twin energy-related commitments to increasing the share of non-fossil fuel power generation capacity to 40 per cent by 2030, aided by technology transfer and low-cost international finance, and to reducing the emissions intensity of its economy by 33 to 35 per cent, measured against a 2005 baseline.

Italy

47. Italy recognizes the catalytic role of energy in promoting sustainable development. Renewable energy is at the core of its energy policy. Renewables represent around 41.6 per cent of total national energy production, with an installed capacity of around 52.4 GW, mostly from small and medium-sized power plants. In 2016, renewable sources in Italy represented about a third of its overall electricity consumption. With over 700,000 plants generating electricity from renewable sources, Italy has already exceeded the European target for 2020, covering 17.6 per cent of its gross final consumption, electrical, thermal and transport-related, with renewable sources. Renewable energy has also created a significant number of jobs, with an estimated 35,000 new positions in 2016.

48. Italy also plays a leading role in energy efficiency measures, with approximately 1 per cent of its GDP invested in environmental sustainability, placing it among the most progressive countries in the world regarding energy efficiency.

49. At the international level, Italy is financing energy access projects in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, for example, through bilateral, multilateral and multi-stakeholder-based cooperation initiatives such as the Italy-Africa Initiative, the Africa-European Union Energy Partnership, Renewable Energy Solutions for the Mediterranean and the Sustainable Energy for All initiative.

Mexico

50. Mexico is committed to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has developed specific measures to achieve the targets on renewable energy, energy efficiency and universal access to modern energy services. Those measures include producing 35 per cent of its electricity using clean energy sources by 2024; reducing the intensity of its final energy consumption by 1.9 per cent per year during the period 2016-2030; achieving 99.8 per cent electrification in the country, thereby benefiting about 1.8 million people by 2024; at least doubling government investment in innovation and technological development for clean energy by 2020; and reaching the regional goal for Canada, the United States and Mexico, with 50 per cent of its electricity generation coming from clean energy by 2025.

51. To achieve universal energy access, the country has established a universal electric service fund to finance electrification in rural and marginalized urban areas, with funding coming from the surplus revenue realized from the wholesale electricity market, the national energy centre and third-party donations.

52. With respect to clean and renewable energy technologies, Mexico has put in place a variety of measures. Its programme for the development of the national electric system for the period 2016-2030 is aimed at ensuring that 63 per cent of

new infrastructure for electricity generation in the country within the next 15 years utilizes clean energy sources. Mexico also participates in the Mission Innovation initiative, the aim of which is to ensure that clean energy is affordable for everyone.

53. Mexico has made progress in promoting energy efficiency in buildings, vehicles and industrial facilities. Its large-scale green credit line for businesses has benefited some 5,000 medium-sized, small and microenterprises through financing to replace air-conditioning equipment, refrigeration and lighting, thereby cutting carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 13,000 tons.

Monaco

54. Monaco established its energy transition programme in 2016, with the main goal of promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030 compared with the baseline year of 1990. Its white paper on energy transition outlines measures for mobilizing all relevant actors for action and is expected to lead to a national agreement on energy transition, involving public institutions and private actors, with the aim of promoting, inter alia, energy audits for buildings, smart electricity meters, productive lighting systems and car-free days.

Russian Federation

55. The Russian Federation supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is taking measures to balance traditional development and expand the use of renewable energy sources, with an emphasis on energy efficiency and the introduction of advanced technologies. The revised version of the country's energy strategy, the goal of which remains to provide stable fuel and energy resources for the period up to 2035, is about to be finalized.

56. The Russian Federation is actively cooperating on energy access and advanced energy technology projects with countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. This includes the construction of gas pipelines, nuclear and hydroelectric power plants, liquefied natural gas facilities and infrastructure for electricity exports, through more than 50 international projects.

57. Energy efficiency continues to be an important priority for the Russian Federation. From 2011 to 2014, the total volume of financial support provided under the State's energy efficiency and development programme was almost \$700 million. The programme has played a catalytic role in mobilizing private investments. The Russian Federation is also actively working to increase energy efficiency in terms of the use of gas.

58. With regard to renewable energy, the Russian Federation remains one of the leaders in hydroelectric power, which accounts for about 17 per cent of the country's electricity production. Efforts are under way to promote wind power and to improve research and development on solar power systems.

Saudi Arabia

59. Saudi Arabia recognizes that energy lies at the heart of a thriving society, driving it to achieve greater productivity and prosperity, and underscores the importance of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, environmental, social and economic, in order to advance to more sustainable energy systems. Saudi Arabia also highlights the role of technology, inclusiveness and flexibility, especially with regard to sources of energy, in achieving that transition.

Slovakia

60. From an energy security point of view, securing a sustainable and affordable supply of all kinds of energy is a priority for Slovakia. With its high dependence on a single energy supplier, Slovakia supports the building of a secure and competitive "European energy union" with a forward-looking climate policy. The country's energy policy, approved in 2014, is aimed at developing a competitive low-carbon energy system that would provide a secure, reliable and efficient supply of all forms of energy at affordable prices, taking into account consumer protection and sustainable development. Several priorities have been identified to enhance energy security, improve energy efficiency, ensure competitiveness and ensure that energy policies are in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

C. United Nations system and international organizations

European Union

61. The European Union and its member States attach great importance to the issue of achieving clean, affordable, reliable and modern energy for all. As one of the partnerships under the Joint Africa-European Union Strategy, the Africa-European Union Energy Partnership is a long-term framework for strategic dialogue between Africa and the European Union with the objectives of sharing knowledge, setting political priorities and developing joint programmes on the key energy issues and challenges of the twenty-first century. The aim of the Partnership is to improve access to secure, affordable and sustainable energy on both continents. Through high-level conferences, technical workshops and dialogues with business, civil society and academia, the Partnership facilitates dialogue between stakeholders and promotes joint action. It has also provided an essential basis for better coordination and harmonization through its mapping of existing initiatives and programmes in Africa.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

62. Building on its multi-partner programme, entitled "Energy-smart food for people and climate", the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continues to assist Member States in making the shift to energy-smart agrifood systems, including through the development of a methodology to access the water-energy-food nexus at both the territorial and the intervention levels, the development of a cost-benefit analysis regarding the introduction of renewable energy in selected agrifood chains and the introduction of solar-powered refrigerators and freezers in small fishing communities in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. With regard to improving access to safe and sustainable energy in emergency and rehabilitation settings, support has been provided to Chad, Kenya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

63. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) emphasizes income generation by linking access to clean energy to agriculture-related activities. IFAD has developed country- and technology-specific pilot approaches, such as those relating to micro-hydropower in Nepal, jatropha biofuel in Mali, a solar-powered drip irrigation system project in northern Benin and the Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme, which provides grants to facilitate the use of solar energy along the value chain, from production to storage and processing.

International Renewable Energy Agency

64. The International Renewable Energy Agency is a global, treaty-based intergovernmental organization that promotes the widespread adoption and sustainable use of all forms of renewable energy. The Agency serves as a centre of excellence for knowledge and innovation, a source of advice for its 150 member countries, a global voice for renewable energy and a network hub for developing collaborative partnerships. The annual meeting of its Assembly provides a unique platform for interaction between policymakers and key stakeholders on issues of common interest in the light of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and efforts by countries to decarbonize and transform their energy systems.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

65. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is committed to addressing the energy needs of refugees, improving access to sustainable fuel, providing a power supply to health centres and utilizing solar-powered lighting. A global strategy for safe access to fuels and energy, launched by UNHCR in 2014, offers crucial guidance and details innovative approaches and technologies, including clean or fuel-efficient cookstoves, alternative and sustainable fuels and solar-powered lighting. In addition, UNHCR has implemented a variety of energy projects to deliver sustainable energy in conflict settings, including a wind power project to support clean energy and reintegration in Bamyan, Afghanistan, and the Brighter Lives for Refugees campaign, in cooperation with the IKEA Foundation, to improve access to cleaner, renewable, sustainable and user-friendly energy supplies for refugees.

United Nations Capital Development Fund

66. The United Nations Capital Development Fund, through its Clean Start programme, supports households and micro-entrepreneurs through microfinance service providers, with the goal of investing \$26 million in six countries in Asia and Africa and enabling over 2.5 million people to benefit from cleaner, more efficient energy by 2020.

United Nations Children's Fund

67. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is applying sustainable energy solutions in its country office programmes of cooperation and is in the process of exploring possibilities for scaling up its involvement and investments in that area. Such initiatives include the provision of improved cookstoves in Bangladesh, Project Lumière in Burundi and "youth kiosks" and "MobiStations" in Uganda. In 2016, UNICEF released a global report on air pollution, *Clear the Air for Children: The Impact of Air Pollution on Children*.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

68. The energy commodity development programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development focuses on reducing information asymmetry for increased energy access and efficiency, promoting natural gas in the global energy mix, increasing local participation to reduce energy poverty, negotiating contracts for improved access to energy services, mitigating the impact of energy price volatility for universal access to energy, and developing and promoting trade, competition and investment policy for energy development.

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

69. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in its role as the secretariat for the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the central platform within the United Nations system for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, continues to provide support for the coordination and implementation of planned activities for the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All. As the secretariat of UN-Energy, the Department also plays an important role in coordinating and implementing energy-related activities among United Nations organizations.

70. In cooperation with other United Nations organizations, the Department has coordinated a series of workshops and meetings on the topic of energy, including an expert group meeting on the theme "Sustainable Development Goal 7 and its role in mitigating impacts from climate change", held in Marrakech, Morocco, in November 2016, on the margins of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and a symposium on the theme "Progress on Goal 7 and its interlinkages with other Sustainable Development Goals", held in Bangkok in June 2017, jointly organized with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. A series of symposiums and meetings have also been planned, to be held in Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa in 2017 and 2018.

71. The Department implements a partnership programme, entitled "Powering the future we want: recognizing leadership and innovative practices in energy for sustainable development", offering a grant in the amount of \$1 million to fund future capacity development activities in relation to energy for sustainable development. The programme is being implemented for an initial period of five years, from 2015 until 2019. The Department is also leading a public-private partnership on minimum electricity access that promotes electrification in rural isolated communities with stand-alone renewable energy systems.

United Nations Development Programme

72. With the aim of ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works with countries to make energy systems and usage more efficient. It also works to increase the global share of renewable energy. Specifically, UNDP helps countries to meet energy needs from the perspective of affordability, reliability and sustainability; supports the development of on- and off-grid renewable energy technologies and delivery services; supports national and local governments in designing and adopting efficient policies and legislation and helps them with integrated solutions that tackle energy efficiency in disaster risk reduction and recovery processes; and supports sustainable cities, including through integrated solutions that combine renewable energy and efficiency measures with other aspects of urban design, such as sustainable mobility, transport and waste management.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

73. The Asia Pacific Energy Portal is one aspect of the support provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to regional member States under the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum. The portal is an innovative platform that combines nearly 200 statistical indicators and over 2,000 policy documents for ESCAP member States, offering a comprehensive view of the region's energy dynamics. ESCAP also implements a multi-year project to widen access to modern energy services for rural communities through its Pro-Poor Public-Private Partnership, with pilot projects in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and

Nepal. ESCAP took up the theme of access to electricity at the first session of its Committee on Energy, held in Bangkok in January 2017. The second Asian and Pacific Energy Forum will be held in Tonga in 2018.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

74. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has been coordinating with the relevant ministries and authorities of member States in addressing and responding to regional energy challenges. Through the implementation of a project aimed at building capacities in the development of appropriate green technologies for improving the livelihood of rural communities, ESCWA supports the dissemination of green energy technologies in rural areas, strengthens the capacities of public sector institutions and facilitates knowledge-sharing. ESCWA is finalizing a regional report on tracking progress made in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7, which will provide an overview of the progress made in the area of energy in the Arab region over the past two decades. A variety of documents and reports, as well as workshops and events, have been developed and organized to strengthen capacity-building for ESCWA member countries on the topic of energy.

Economic Commission for Africa

75. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has continued to provide support to member States and regional economic communities in adopting clean energy technologies and policies with a view to achieving sustainable energy for all. ECA undertook a continent-wide initiative to strengthen the capacity of African countries to promote the use of renewable energy in order to achieve sustainable development and poverty reduction. The project looked at the potential of bioenergy and of policies in support of its development in the African context, with particular emphasis on liquid biofuels, owing to their far-reaching positive effects. The ECA publication *Enhancing Domestic Private Sector Development in Africa: A Focus on Renewable Energy* explored how Governments in Africa can effectively employ interventionist industrial policy to increase private entrepreneurship and stimulate domestic production, especially in sectors such as construction and energy.

Economic Commission for Europe

76. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), through its Committee on Sustainable Energy and subsidiary bodies, implements and supports a variety of activities in the field of sustainable energy and its cross-cutting areas, including a project entitled "Pathways to sustainable energy", which is aimed at facilitating policy dialogues and exploring policy pathways, and a project entitled "Methane management in extractive industries", aimed at increasing the capacity of ECE member States to measure, report, verify and reduce methane emissions in key energy-related extractive industries. ECE is also advancing the development, dissemination and maintenance of the United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources, a global classification system for energy and mineral reserves and resources. In 2017, the Commission's Group of Experts on Renewable Energy prepared a "Renewable energy status report", in close collaboration with the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century, providing a comprehensive overview of the current status of renewable energy and energy efficiency trends in 17 selected countries.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

77. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) implemented a project entitled "Sustainable energy in the Caribbean: reducing the

carbon footprint in the Caribbean through the promotion of energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy technologies" during the period 2014-2016, with the overall objective of strengthening the capacity of Caribbean countries in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy. ECLAC also organized a regional workshop entitled "Sustainable development agendas: how energy and emission accounting can contribute to policy design and decision-making". Jointly organized by the Statistics Division and the World Bank-led global partnership Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services, the workshop contributed to the dialogue on energy-related country and regional development agendas.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

78. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) continues its efforts to promote energy-related policies and strategies, strengthen education and capacity-building and share best practices, including through a project concerning the solar-powered electrification of 75 rural schools in Benin, Madagascar, Mauritania, the Niger and Togo, benefiting approximately 600 teachers and 24,600 schoolchildren.

United Nations Environment Programme

79. The work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on energy is aimed at supporting countries in improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewable energy as part of their efforts to achieve low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways. UNEP provided support for six East African countries in exploring their potential for geothermal energy, enabled the installation of 3 million square metres of solar water heating panels in five countries and helped eight countries to access technologies related to renewable energy and energy efficiency. UNEP also supports an electricity consumption reduction project in Morocco, which is expected to cut carbon dioxide emissions by more than 4 million tons by 2022 and significantly reduce energy costs for thousands of people. UNEP hosts the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency, a thematic hub for energy efficiency, as part of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative and as a satellite of the Centre on Energy, Climate and Sustainable Development. Both Centres are operated jointly with the Technical University of Denmark under the UNEP DTU Partnership.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

80. With the adoption and rapid entry into force of the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat continues to provide support to developing countries so as to facilitate their transition to a sustainable energy future, including through support for the technical examination of policy options with high mitigation potential and adaptation, health and sustainable development co-benefits.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

81. The strategic approach of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) focuses on urban energy planning, municipal energy policy and legislation and urban energy finance; energy access for the urban poor, with a special emphasis on women and youth; energy and resource efficiency in the built environment; and renewable energy technologies in the urban energy mix.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

82. The energy-related programme portfolio of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) focuses primarily on the promotion of energy

efficiency policies, technologies and practices, as well as renewable sources of energy for the facilitation of productive activities, with a special focus on rural areas and industrial processes. In addition, UNIDO assists individual countries in reviewing both their energy policies and the institutional and regulatory frameworks of their energy sectors, while linking those policies and frameworks to their capacities to develop and disseminate renewable energy techniques and related industrial applications. UNIDO also champions the Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres and co-organizes the Vienna Energy Forum, a leading global event on climate change issues held every other year since 2009. In 2017, the theme of the forum was "Sustainable energy for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement".

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

83. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research plays a lead role in the roll-out of the Sustainable Development Goals through the provision of training, awareness-raising and materials for diplomats from developing countries, as well as for key officials from all Member States, across all branches of Government. Training and support in relation to the achievement of Goal 7 is made available through both e-learning and face-to-face events.

World Bank Group

84. The engagement of the World Bank Group in the energy sector is designed to help countries secure the affordable, reliable and sustainable energy supply needed to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity. In 2016, the Group's financing in the energy sector totalled \$11.5 billion, including about \$2.9 billion for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. Programmes supported by the Group include a solar park in Jordan that is the largest private sector-led solar power initiative in the Middle East and North Africa, a national electrification plan in Myanmar that will create 7.2 million new household connections over the next 15 years and a project known as "Lighting Africa" aimed at reaching 250 million more people by 2030. Jointly prepared by the World Bank and the International Energy Agency, the third edition of the *Global Tracking Framework* was released in April 2017. It provides a dashboard showing the world's progress towards the three sustainable energy objectives — energy access, energy efficiency and renewable energy — and features, for the first time, region-based chapters exploring subregional issues and challenges, with input from the five United Nations regional commissions.

World Health Organization

85. The World Health Organization (WHO) has produced indoor air quality guidelines on household fuel combustion and, in 2016, published a report on household air pollution, *Burning Opportunity: Clean Household Energy for Health, Sustainable Development and Well-being of Women and Children*. The organization's urban health initiative is aimed at strengthening capacity to use data on health as evidence to advocate and implement plans to improve energy access and energy efficiency in large urban areas of developing countries, with the aim of reducing air pollution.

World Meteorological Organization

86. The World Meteorological Organization facilitates the exchange of data that can help energy developers and managers better plan for changes in energy demand, the development of local energy systems and compliance with environmental requirements. The organization's Global Framework for Climate Services addresses

issues relating to user requirements for climate information and energy and identifies and addresses observational, research and projected production needs to improve climate services for the energy sector.

IV. Strengthening coordination and institutional support on energy in the context of the 2030 Agenda

87. The 2030 Agenda represents a paradigm shift with multiple implications for international cooperation that could effectively support global poverty eradication and sustainable development. With energy firmly embedded within the 2030 Agenda, any proposals on the strengthening, through existing arrangements, of both inter-agency and intergovernmental coordination and institutional support on energy issues should best be considered in that broad context.

88. In his 2017 report on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on ensuring a better future for all (A/72/124), the Secretary-General identified several critical gaps in skill sets and capacities within the United Nations system, potential institutional measures to address them, ways to strengthen delivery at the country level and potential mechanisms to strengthen accountability in order to guide the support of the United Nations development system for the 2030 Agenda, including through improving oversight by Member States.

89. The Secretary-General's report also identified significant gaps in the thematic coverage of the Sustainable Development Goals in terms of expenditures and personnel within the United Nations system. Goal 7 ranked second-lowest of all the Goals in 2016 in terms of expenditure, at less than 1 per cent of overall expenditure on Goals within the system.²

90. On the ways to strengthen intergovernmental and interagency coordination, the following relevant input was received by the Secretariat from Austria, China, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union, IFAD and the International Renewable Energy Agency:

(a) Austria emphasized the need for synergies and for avoiding duplication, including the importance of effectively leveraging existing networks, such as the Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres established by UNIDO, and of promoting coherence between the United Nations system and the non-governmental organization Sustainable Energy for All through its relationship agreement;

(b) China indicated the need for synergies across the global energy agenda and for the establishment of green and low-carbon global energy governance to promote global green development cooperation;

(c) Turkey stressed the need to strengthen coordination between international institutions and Governments, especially to improve the investment environment;

(d) The United Arab Emirates stressed the need for a much greater focus by the United Nations on energy access and clean cooking and heating, especially through renewable energy technologies, including enhanced United Nations capacity within country teams on policy reforms and financing facilitation. The country also stressed that, while there should be no new intergovernmental body on

² See Dalberg, "System-wide outline of the functions and capacities of the United Nations development system" (June 2017), available from www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg_undf-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf.

energy, UN-Energy should be strengthened to coordinate work among United Nations agencies, as well as with existing organizations such as the International Renewable Energy Agency, the International Energy Agency and Sustainable Energy for All. UN-Energy should be supported by a joint work programme. The strengthening of UN-Energy should include core funding for Secretariat staff, in order to ensure effective coordination and more equitable attention to and support for energy in the United Nations system;

(e) The European Union stressed that: (i) intergovernmental forums on energy already existed, including the International Energy Agency and the International Renewable Energy Agency; (ii) the high-level political forum played a central role in convening Member States to monitor progress on the entire 2030 Agenda, including Goal 7; (iii) UN-Energy must become a mechanism for enhanced inter-agency cooperation and coordination on Sustainable Development Goal 7; (iv) stronger cooperation was needed between the United Nations and relevant non-United Nations actors such as the International Renewable Energy Agency and Sustainable Energy for All; and (v) it was important to leverage existing mechanisms consistent with ongoing efforts on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review mandates;

(f) IFAD stressed the need for increased interministerial policy dialogue and cooperation on energy;

(g) The International Renewable Energy Agency reiterated its willingness to support United Nations efforts aimed at the implementation of Goal 7 and the 2030 Agenda, in particular in terms of renewable energy, and emphasized the role of the annual meeting of its Assembly as a unique platform for interaction between policymakers and key stakeholders.

V. Preparations for the high-level political forum in 2018

91. The first global review of Sustainable Development Goal 7 leading up to the high-level political forum in 2018 presents a unique opportunity to further the commitment to delivering on the Goal. Key priority actions to be undertaken within existing mandates and resources could include:

(a) Support for voluntary national reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 7 and its interlinkages with other Goals;

(b) Development of a comprehensive work programme and results framework for UN-Energy in support of Goal 7 implementation to strengthen coherence and coordination;

(c) Convening a preparatory event on Goal 7 in late 2017 in support of the global review at the high-level political forum in 2018, for which key United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations should be leveraged effectively, such as UNDP (capacity development), UNEP (its global energy efficiency summit), UNIDO (the Vienna Energy Forum), the International Renewable Energy Agency (its Assembly), the International Energy Agency (global analysis), the regional commissions (regional forums on sustainable development), WHO (health impact) and the World Bank (access, finance and investment);

(d) Establishing a United Nations inter-agency task force to define and monitor specific interlinkage targets between energy and other Sustainable Development Goals, including those on education, water, health, food security and poverty. Such a task force could be coordinated through UN-Energy and include experts from agencies such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, FAO,

IFAD, WHO, UNEP, UNESCO, UNDP and UN-Habitat, the regional commissions and other intergovernmental organizations such as the International Renewable Energy Agency;

(e) Developing an in-depth global assessment on energy with a focus on the interlinkages between energy and other Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim being to present a comprehensive assessment of critical issues such as energy security, the availability of energy resources, innovative technologies and future energy scenarios. A synthesis for policymakers would be produced as advance material to provide input for the high-level political forum of 2018;

(f) Developing multi-stakeholder partnerships on interlinkages, building on the competencies of the United Nations development system and targeting least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and sub-Saharan Africa, through South-South, North-South and triangular partners. Such partnerships would be monitored and showcased through the United Nations partnerships for sustainable development platform.

VI. Conclusion and way forward

92. In order to support Member States in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 7, the United Nations development system must rise to the challenges posed in that regard. The first global review of Goal 7 leading up to the high-level political forum in 2018 presents a unique opportunity to define and implement effective innovative mechanisms, within existing arrangements and resources, to accelerate the implementation of global goals and targets pertaining to energy. Member States may wish to consider the measures and priority actions proposed in sections IV and V above in order to strengthen intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination with regard to energy in the context of advancing the 2030 Agenda.